OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND COPING MECHANISMS AS PERCEIVED BY THE DIRECTORS OF ADULT LITERACY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN TEXAS

A Dissertation

by

MELINDA W. AUSTIN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2004

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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ABSTRACT

Occupational Stress and Coping Mechanisms as Perceived by the Directors of Adult Literacy Educational Programs in Texas. (May 2004)

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The purpose of this study was to identify and assess the stressors and coping mechanisms related to job performance as perceived by directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas. This research also attempted to determine whether there were relationships between: specific demographic variables and job related stressors; and those same demographic variables and coping mechanisms of adult literacy education program administrators in Texas.

A survey instrument was sent to all adult literacy education program directors in Texas in June, 2002. Demographic information, as well as information regarding types of stressors, and coping strategies used by those program directors was collected and analyzed. Major findings for the study indicated:

1. A majority of adult literacy education program directors in Texas experienced a significant level of occupational stress and a high overall general stress level.
2. The top stressors identified by the program directors were: *Data Collection/Analysis, Statewide Accountability System, Development/ Maintenance of School Budget,*

Funding Related Issues, Student Achievement, Technology Related Issues, Administration of Programs for Special Students, Selection of Faculty and Staff, Dealing with Unsatisfactory Performance by Professional Staff, Dismissal of a Teacher or Staff Member.

3. The major stress-coping mechanisms employed by the program directors were *Planning ahead for stressful events* and *Communication with significant others or peers.*
4. Program directors with greater adult education experience have a lower level of occupational stress compared to less experienced program directors.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. To address the sources of stress related to data collection, statewide accountability, and program budgets, training should be made available for administrators to improve their understanding and competencies to handle these demands.
2. Implementation of a system or network in which program directors could share problems, insights, and help one another address problems similar to what they may encounter in their jobs would strengthen the whole adult literacy education system in Texas.
3. Communication and leadership in long range planning is necessary from the state office to assist program directors in planning ahead for stressful events.

DEDICATION

This study is lovingly dedicated to my three dear sons, who are the greatest joys in my life. I hope to inspire them, as they have inspired me, to go confidently in the direction of their dreams. This study is also dedicated to my husband Yassin, whose love and encouragement have enabled me to complete this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my gratitude to my esteemed committee members who have given so much of themselves to so many students in their many years of service to Texas A&M. I am proud to be named as their student and I appreciate their guidance and encouragement.

I am thankful to all of my parents and grandparents, my first teachers, who have shown me through their experiences the value of persistence and hard work.

I am thankful for God’s amazing grace which lifts me up each day and for all of the angels who draw near to me when I need them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE Page

TABLE Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Adult literacy education in Texas is considered to be an entitlement, regardless of a person's age. The Adult and Community Education Division of the Texas Education Agency's mission statement is "Every Texan, regardless of age, is entitled to a basic education" (Texas Education Agency, 2001). The administration of an adult literacy education program is a complex and sometimes stressful job. Administrators face challenges from within and outside of their programs. Adult literacy education program administrators have many responsibilities for key program components such as professional development, staff supervision, resource management, program monitoring and reporting (*U.S. Department of Education,* 2001, p.1).

Both the operation of the program and the population served present potential problems for directors. The adult literacy education population is extremely diverse, including English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), multiple languages, learning style differences, and other special needs. Funding is usually a struggle because most adult literacy education programs are supported through a patchwork of funding from state and local agencies which have been undergoing changes brought on by the welfare

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The style and format of this dissertation follow that of the *American Educational Research Journal.*

reform movement (Withorn, 1999). Facilities for the adult literacy programs are often donated and are not permanent, causing the programs sometimes to undergo disruptive moves (F. Salas personal communication, January 30, 2004). Programs offer both day and night classes to serve the constituents the best, which require long hours of supervision by program administrators. Teachers in adult literacy education programs often have low salaries, lack benefits, and have temporary employment status (Amstutz & Sheared, 2000). All of these conditions produce stress for both the administrators and the teachers in the programs.

Statement of the Problem

Stress negatively impacts the lives and job performance of many people, including school administrators. School principals have intense job stress due to the extreme demands of their occupation (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). Adult literacy education program directors have many of the same job demands as a school principal or superintendent with the added challenges of welfare reform issues, non-professional staffing, and limited funding (TEA, 2001). The role of the adult literacy education program administrator is vitally important to the strength of the adult literacy education system and has seldom been studied (Galbraith, Sisco, & Guglielmino, 2001). In Texas there are no regulations or state required standards regarding the employment of adult literacy education directors. This important role has seldom been studied. Information is needed to define the demands, stressors, and coping mechanisms of adult literacy education program directors. It is necessary to understand the factors that may

contribute to the adult literacy education program administrator's job satisfaction, persistence, and longevity in order to select and prepare administrators better for this important role in Texas today and in the future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and assess the stressors and coping mechanisms related to job performance as perceived by directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas. This research also attempted to determine whether there were relationships between specific demographic variables and job related stressors; and those same demographic variable and coping mechanisms of adult literacy education program administrators in Texas. Information acquired will add to the limited research available regarding this occupation.

Research Questions

The study addressed these specific research questions:

1. What is the perceived general stress level of adult literacy education program directors?
2. What are the occupational stressors related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?
3. What are the stress-coping mechanisms related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

4. To what degree do demographic variables impact the perceived occupational stressors and the coping mechanisms identified by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used in this study:

Adult literacy education: Basic education in the areas of communication and computation, including reading, writing, and verbal communication in English and ability in math and problem-solving skills for out-of-school adults (Chisman & Campbell, 1990).

Adult literacy education programs in Texas: Educational programs for adult learners that receive funding from the Texas Education Agency. These programs may be provided by community based organizations, school districts, community colleges or regional education service centers.

Adult literacy education program administrators: The professional educator responsible for the administration of an adult literacy education program.

Coping mechanisms: Efforts on behavioral, cognitive, affective or motivational levels by a person to reverse a threat or to meet the demands of a stressor, (Siegrist, 2001, p.53).

Stress: The nonspecific result of any demand upon the body, be the effect mental or physical (Selye, 1993, p.7).

Stressors: An environmental demand or threat that taxes or exceeds a person's ability to meet the challenge, (Siegrist, 2001, p.53).

Occupational stress: Also known as job stress and work stress, it is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker, (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 1999).

Assumptions

1. Administrators had been in their position long enough so that the perceptions were realistic.
2. The survey instrument used in this study accurately measured the perceptions of work-related stressors and coping mechanisms of administrators of adult literacy education programs
3. The person who completed the survey was the director of an adult literacy education program in Texas who was intended to respond the survey.
4. The perceptions of the participants were accurately interpreted by the questions in the survey instrument.

Limitations

1. This study was limited by the individual's perception of his or her own stressors and stress-coping mechanisms, and the accuracy with which the survey instrument reflected their personal perceptions.
2. There may have been hesitancy by participants to reveal personal information related to their work environment.

3. Because of data being acquired during the summer months when staff is usually on vacation, not everyone was at the work site when the initial questionnaire arrived, this may have affected the initial rate of response.

Delimitation

This study was delimited to the 56 directors of adult literacy education programs as identified by the Texas Education Agency as of May 31, 2002. No generalizations can be extrapolated to other groups.

Significance of the Study

Determining what the perceived stressors were for directors of adult literacy education programs and how they coped with stressors provides vital information about their occupation. These data will provide an important piece of information in understanding the role of these leaders in administering adult literacy education in Texas. The conclusions of this study will help administrators in programs of adult literacy education make informed decisions about determining in-service training needs.

Contents of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter I contains an introduction, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, operational definitions, assumptions and limitations, and a statement of the significance of the study. Chapter II contains a review of the literature. Chapter III contains the methodology and

procedures. Chapter IV contains the analyses and comparisons of the data. Chapter V includes the researcher's conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Adult literacy education has been described as integral to every facet of American civilization and as the entire process by which a culture transmits itself over time (Courtney, 1989). Adult literacy education in the United States is characterized by its diversity in programs, clientele, and purposes (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). Knowles (1977) described America's adult literacy education field as developing almost haphazardly without a unified leadership or direction and stated that this formlessness had been both an advantage and a disadvantage. The evolution of today's mosaic of adult literacy education in America is a result of over three centuries of social forces, individual and economic needs, political flux, and world events.

A Brief History of Adult Literacy Education in America

The history of adult literacy education in America spans more than three hundred years, from the colonial period to the present (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994; Sticht, 2002). Grattan (1959) introduced his book, *American Ideas About Adult Literacy Education 1710-1951*, stating that "adult literacy education is an ancient human concern, not a strictly contemporary enthusiasm" (p.7). The condition of illiteracy has existed in the United Sates since its beginning, but the problem of illiteracy developed as demands of commerce and business required literacy skills (Delker, 1988). The limited recorded history of American adult literacy education has been criticized for its inaccuracies

including marginalizing the contributions and participation of women, black and Native Americans (Hugo, 1990; Franklin & Anderson, 1978; Kett, 1994, Courtney, 1989). Despite the imperfections of adult literacy education's historical narrative, many educators agree that modern day planners and educators can learn how to avoid repeating mistakes, and may gain inspiration based on practices of the past (Smith, 1970; Knowles, 1977; Stubblefield & Keane,1989; Hugo, 1990; Sticht, 2000).

Colonial America

Sticht (2002) described adult learning in colonial America as including religious instruction, vocational apprenticeships, common schools of the original thirteen colonies, and literacy training for the military during the Revolutionary War. Early American settlers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were most influenced by the culture of the Protestant English majority. Formal education was a privilege related to gender, race, social class, geographic region, and economic rank (Lagemann, 2003; Stubblefield & Keane, 1994).

Grattan (1959) stated that to understand the history of adult literacy education in America one must understand the strong religious and moral motivation that existed to promote adult literacy education. Puritans believed that being able to read and study the Bible were necessary for salvation (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). Religious schools were the first schools established in America. Beginning in the 1630's, church-sponsored formal schools appeared (Cremin, 1970). In 1636, Harvard was the first university established in the colonies, the primary purpose was to train ministers. Massachusetts and other colonies soon founded universities for higher learning, (Sticht, 2002). A

system of common schools began in 1647, when Massachusetts passed the first compulsory school law. The law required that communities that had fifty families hire a teacher and communities of more that 100 families establish a grammar school (Sticht, 2002; Costa, 1988). This was the beginning of today's tax-supported school system.

Everyday living was most often the source of adult learning rather than formal settings or educational institutions (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the most important institution for education was the family (Lagemann, 2003). A man's social role was as the spiritual leader and provider for his family and a woman's social role was centered around the home (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). Adult literacy education followed the Puritan concept of reading and study only for the sake of salvation and to fulfill social roles.

Self-directed learning was prevalent in pre-Revolutionary America due to the social conditions and the lack of formal educational institutions (Brockett & Heimstra, 1991). Puritan leader Cotton Mather wrote about forming discussion groups for adults in his book, *Essays to do Good: Addressed to all Christians, Whether in Public or Private Capacities*, published in 1710 (Grattan, 1959). Mather's book is considered to be one of the first works leading to the development of adult literacy education in America (Grattan, 1959). Mather's works influenced other early American leaders including, Benjamin Franklin.

Learning resources for self-directed learners included the Bible, almanacs, oral tradition, letters, diaries, and other written communications of a personal nature. Newspapers flourished; from 1713 to 1745, twenty-two newspapers were founded in the

colonies, (Costa, 1988). Wealthier colonists possessed private library collections, some of which were subsequently donated to towns for the use of the citizens. Subscription libraries, established by voluntary associations such as Benjamin Franklin's club, The Junto, in 1731, were the most popular form of libraries at this time (Sticht, 2002). These early libraries and discussion groups were founded for the purposes of self-improvement and adult liberal education; later they were a source of basic literacy instruction for illiterate adults.

The most prevalent type of adult literacy education in colonial America was the vocational apprenticeship (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). Modeling the British apprenticeship system, the apprentice had a legal agreement known as an indenture to serve the master for seven years or to the age of twenty-one. The master of the apprentice was responsible to teach the student a trade as well as basic reading and writing skills (Knowles, 1977; Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). Apprenticeships provided an expanded access to learning by women, minorities, and others of lower socioeconomic status whom otherwise would not have had educational opportunities (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994).

Proprietary evening schools were formed as early as the 1660's in urban areas. Basic reading, writing, and arithmetic instruction were offered to adult students who typically worked in the daytime, including apprentices and young men preparing for college. These schools could furnish the basic educational requirements of apprentices and any person who could afford the cost of enrollment. Women were usually allowed to enroll but often were taught in separate classes (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994).

Literacy levels of native-born colonialists during this period have been assessed through occupational records and show that minors were less literate than older workers, suggesting that adults engaged in some literacy learning (Sticht, 2002). Some analyses of public documents from the late eighteenth century estimate a high literacy rate, 80 to 90 percent for white property owners. Indentured servants, immigrants who received free passage to the new world and boarding for a fixed period of employment and who comprised one half to two thirds of all white immigrants to the thirteen colonies after the 1630's, had a high literacy rate, about 80 percent. Less literate male and female workers had some informal education and improved their literacy in adulthood (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989). Estimated literacy rates for New England's poor white population, Native Americans, and African Americans, were much lower than for the middle class (Sticht, 2002). General literacy levels assessed at this time mask the large regional differences, since illiteracy was far greater in southern and western states than in northern and eastern states (Stevens, 1987). Stevens (1987) stated that "Illiteracy was stratified by occupation, wealth, race, ethnicity, nativity, gender, age and population density" (p.102). This disparity persisted from the colonial period throughout the first seventy years of the nineteenth century.

An important step forward in American education was made in the late 1770's as the colonies prepared for the war for independence when the first commitment of government resources for adult literacy education was made to teach reading, writing, and computing to the soldiers of the Continental Army and Navy (Sticht, 2000; Sticht, 2002).

The Eighteenth Century

Independence from Great Britain brought an ideology of improvement for the common good. The elite tradition of freedom and opportunity held true only for the white male citizens for the time being, still excluding minorities, women, and economically deprived citizens from America's new democracy (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989). Fundamental social inequality was accepted by the cultural elite. The exclusion of Black and Native Americans from educational opportunities was the norm in colonial times (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989). Efforts to provide education for the disenfranchised segment of society were demonstrated by the Quakers. In 1688, the Quakers protested slavery in America and were widely known for their anti-slavery efforts and contributions to the education of blacks throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Franklin & Anderson, 1978; Denton, 1993).

In the 1700's, there was an upsurge of educational opportunities for blacks, including schools for industrial training (Denton, 1993). These new opportunities were for the most part extinguished with the enactment of legislation in most states repressing the education of blacks (Denton, 1993, p. x). Prior to the Civil War, some slaves participated in apprenticeship training as a part of plantation life, producing skilled trades people such as carpenters, masons, barbers, and seamstresses (McGee & Neufeldt, 1985). Some slaves were able to read and write, learning from other slaves, the masters or their families or abolitionist whites. At the beginning of the Civil War, various state laws were passed that made teaching slaves to read and write a crime (Sticht, 2002).

In addition to the work of abolitionists who sought to improve the education and social standing of blacks, several other movements began prior to the Civil War that had goals of improving the standing of women and Native Americans. In 1787, a trend toward encouraging the education of women was represented in Dr. Benjamin Rush's "Thoughts on Female Education" in which he argued that "the country must have well-educated mothers in order to have well educated children" (Costa, 1988, p.4).

The Nineteenth Century

Delker (1988) stated that "in the nineteenth century our nation became committed to universal free education, which included the notion that in time, every citizen would be literate and comfortable with the printed and written word as part of the fabric of everyday life and learning" (p.xiii). The period of the antebellum, civil war and reconstruction years were a golden age of publishing in which magazines, newspapers, and books became more available that ever before. The newly available printed materials were resources for the community lyceums, various societies, study groups, and circulating libraries that fostered adult learning (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989).

Voluntary societies for adult literacy education developed in the early nineteenth century (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989). In the mid-nineteenth century, lyceums were popular as a form of voluntary adult literacy education in the Northeast and Midwest United States. The lyceums were organized locally for the purpose of self-improvement. Studies were designed for the members' mutual benefit (Grattan, 1959).

The Chautauqua Movement started in New York in 1874 and grew to over one hundred chapters. It was considered to be the first national adult literacy education

program and correspondence school. Chautauqua founder John H. Vincent was credited with creating a prophetic theory of adult literacy education that was based on lifelong learning with a goal of democratization of adult literacy education, providing access for all adults (Scott, 1999). The growth of adult literacy education continued in the late nineteenth century when democratic groups flourished that combined both education and political action, such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the Farmer's Alliance, The Grange, and various workers unions (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989).

During the Civil War, an estimated 180,000 African American soldiers served in the military. The Union Army provided literacy education for enlisted black soldiers and other adults behind Union lines (McGee & Neufeldt, 1985). Sources reported less than a five percent literacy rate for slaves in 1860 and about a ten percent literacy rate for freedmen, which rose to a possible 69 percent by 1914, illustrating the surge to the classroom of freedmen (Denton, 1993, p.36). Efforts to educate and provide for the general welfare of freed slaves began with the "Freedmen's schools" set up primarily on plantations, and taught by family members of white plantation owners or members from missionary groups. In 1866, over fifty freedmen's aid societies were sending teachers, supplies, and support to the South (Smith, 1970; Butchart, 1996). The Federal Government sponsored the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865, which made its greatest contribution to southern African-Americans by establishing a network of schools. After only four years of work, the Freedman's Bureau was ordered closed (Butchart, 1996).

The first history of adult literacy education was written by J.W. Hudson in 1851. Hudson was the first author to use the term ‘adult literacy education’ (Sticht, 2002). Hudson’s description of adult literacy education included the concept that it was the organization and institutional provision of learning opportunities, mainly for adults of low socioeconomic status (Houle, 1992).

The U.S. Census included literacy data for the first time in 1840, when heads of families were asked how many white persons in the family over age 20 years could neither read nor write (Costa, 1988). Definitions of literacy evolved over time as literacy data were collected for the U.S. Census. In the 1860 census, literacy data was based on asking individuals over 20 whether they could read or write. In the 1870 census, the age range was expanded to include people from age ten years, reporting whether they could read and write. Compulsory school attendance laws were in effect in twenty-seven states by 1890 (Costa, 1988). In 1900, the U.S. Census Bureau defined people to be illiterate if the person was aged ten years or older and was unable to read and write in their native language (Costa, 1988). This was a period of expanded enrollment in the public school system, growing from 57 percent of American children between five and eighteen enrolled in 1865, to over 75 percent enrolled by 1918. The rising public school attendance was reflected in the rising literacy rate which increased steadily from 1870 to 1920 (Butts & Cremin, 1953).

The transformation of the United States into an industrial nation occurred largely after the Civil War in the decades from 1860 to 1890. Industrialization, urbanization, and immigration caused a new interdependency of American society (Stubblefield & Keane,

1989). As a result of these societal changes in the late nineteenth century, literacy became regarded as a social problem (Rauschhuber, 2001). The decades following the turn of the century brought phenomenal changes in the United States and the world. Motivated by two world wars and the Great Depression, vast technological, economic, political, and cultural changes took place (Knowles, 1977).

The Progressive Era

The period of the 1880's to the 1920's has been labeled as the Progressive Era because it was a time of intense social reform which was fueled by increased immigration, social unrest, and impending world war (Hugo, 2002). America's transition from an agrarian nation to an industrialized nation occurred in the years from 1870 to 1906; both the private and public segments of workforce education developed at this time (Gray & Herr, 1998).

Social changes and heavy immigration to the United States during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century motivated a growing concern for the education of the new Americans (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989). As the United States prepared to enter World War I, draft registration revealed that 25 percent of the draftees were illiterate and as a result the government became deeply concerned about the problem of adult illiteracy (Costa, 1988; Cook, 1977). Legislation was passed in 1917 that required immigrants to pass a literacy test proving they were literate in some language (Costa, 1988).

Citizenship classes, settlement houses, and moonlight schools were some sources that provided basic adult literacy education that was accessible to the masses. In large

cities, citizenship classes were the most common focus of literacy education (Rauschhuber, 2001). By the end of the nineteenth century, over four hundred settlement houses had been established by social reformers to aid the undereducated and poor immigrants who were flooding into the United States' largest cities. Settlement houses provided basic education including reading, writing, English language training, and healthcare to new immigrants who could not find help elsewhere (Sticht, 2002).

Adult literacy education developed in the early twentieth century to become a mass movement (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989). The founders and leaders of the adult literacy education field believed in learning as a social process at the local and national levels, and had faith in the power of education to improve the individual and society (Hugo, 2002). Hundreds of voluntary organizations promoted adult literacy education with a wide range of causes including vocational, public health, social service, guidance, and religious objectives.

Moonlight schools were first started in Kentucky in 1911, when public schools were opened to adults on moonlit nights. America's transition from an agrarian nation to an industrialized nation occurred in the years from 1870 to 1906 and both the private and public segments of workforce education developed at this time (Gray & Herr, 1998). Volunteers taught basic skills primarily to native born adults who had no previous education. In the following years, moonlight schools spread to ten or more states and special sessions for illiterate draftees were organized in 1914 (Costa, 1988).

The decades following the turn of the century brought phenomenal changes in the United States and the world. While these changes were motivated by two world wars

and the Great Depression, they resulted in vast technological, economic, political, and cultural change that resulted in a major economic shift (Knowles, 1977).This major economic shift required a change in the preparation of the nation's work force. Vocational education led by proprietary schools flourished between 1890 and the Great Depression. Vocational institutions, correspondence schools and evening colleges primarily offering evening classes had enrollment increases higher than 500 percent between 1900 and 1917 (Kett, 1994). Passage of the Smith –Hughes Act of 1917 enabled public schools to offer secondary school level vocational education as well (Grattan, 1959).

By 1920, both formal and informal educational opportunities for students over sixteen years of age had expanded greatly. Colleges, technical schools, independent professional schools, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Chatauquas, farmer's institutes, Cooperative Extension Service training, and libraries were all growing sources of adult literacy education (Butts & Cremin, 1953; Knowles, 1977). The women's club movement increased the number of women involved in educational groups across the country (Hugo, 2002). The increased interest in improving adult literacy education programs led to the creation of the Department of Adult Literacy Education of the National Education Association in 1924 and the American Association of Adult Literacy Education in 1926 (Butts & Cremin, 1953).

The 1930's and 1940's

In the 1930's, the period of the Great Depression in the United States prompted increased governmental concern and financial aid for the education and employment of young adults. Over 2.5 million youth were involved in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and other programs that provided work experience training and basic education. The Depression shocked the labor movement into action. Unions began to recognize that education was a major role for their organizations (Knowles, 1977).

Both world wars influenced adult literacy education trends. Unprecedented labor demands arose due to the drafting of workers and the need for wartime production led to shortages of skilled workers and resulted in the development of private sector training. Unfortunately, these training programs lost ground after wartime due to post-war changes in the economy (Sticht, 2002).

In the years prior to the United States entering World War II, the military was aware of an illiteracy problem in the general population (Cook, 1977). In 1941, a literacy requirement was enacted for military inductees. The results proved distressing because four percent of white inductees and about 11 percent of black inductees were rejected as illiterate. When the United States entered the war in 1941, the literacy rule was changed in order to qualify more manpower. Only an understanding of English was required for acceptance into the military. Some local literacy efforts as well as the army's Special Training Units were created to help illiterate inductees develop the academic skills necessary for military service (Cook, 1977). Contributions to the field of adult literacy education at this time were the creation of special adult literacy education instructional

materials and a rising awareness of the adult illiteracy problem (Cook, 1977). The involvement of the federal government in adult literacy education continued after the war with the implementation of the Servicemen's Adjustment Act, or G.I. Bill in 1944. The G.I. Bill subsidized vocational training and higher education for over two million veterans (Stubblefield & Keene, 1989).

The 1950's and 1960's

In the two decades after World War II, statistics for illiteracy were lower than ever before, but an awareness of functional illiteracy was growing (Cook, 1977). State legislation established adult elementary education in most states, but there was no federal legislation yet (Cook, 1977). The National Commission for Adult Literacy was formed in 1957 to raise governmental awareness of adult literacy issues.

The civil rights era opened educational opportunities for many under-served populations including migrant workers, economically disadvantaged, minority, and incarcerated adults. Federal funding was allotted and legislation was enacted to carry out extensive programs, provide educational materials, and train teachers.

The first major federal program of President Kennedy's "War on Poverty" was the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, was initiated because a majority of unemployed adults lacked basic skills (Sticht, 2002; Cook, 1977). President Johnson's "Great Society" programs continued President Kennedy's focus on ending poverty and racial injustice (Stubblefield & Keene, 1989). The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 marked the first time the federal government allotted funds directly for adult literacy education (Cook, 1977). From this legislation the Job Corps was formed to establish

training centers for youth aged sixteen to twenty-one to provide remedial education and occupational training. The Adult Basic Education Program was formed to develop adult basic education programs at the state level (Sticht, 2002). Also, an interest in literacy research, professional publications, and testing instruments for adult literacy education began to emerge (Cook, 1977).

The Adult Education Act of 1966 created a National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education to review the status and effectiveness of the newly established programs. Four amendments to this act contributed to the growth of the adult literacy education and literacy system during the last thirty years of the twentieth century by expanding the eligibility of the adult populations and of service providers (Sticht, 2002).

The Modern Era

Concern for the problems of illiteracy is basic to all countries no matter what is their level of economic development, though interest and funding for adult literacy education tend to rise and fall on a crisis basis (Cook, 1977). There has been a national focus on the need for adult literacy education in America over the last two decades. Illiteracy, poverty, immigration, unemployment, and a lack of work force skills are all problems that have been addressed by legislation that points to adult literacy education for solutions. There continues to be a literacy problem with approximately ten million Americans almost totally illiterate in the English language, (Sticht, 2001; Sticht, 2002).

The process of globalization which began in the United States and Western Europe in the 1970's, brought many forces of change to the American economy and adult literacy education (Jarvis, 2001). Jarvis (2001) described globalization as "the

process in which the world is becoming more uniform and standardized through the forces of the capitalist market operating on a worldwide basis, utilizing contemporary information technology" (p.4). Globalization led to changing work force demands, resulting in the emergence of lifelong learning in the West.

Kett (1994) stated that several forces propelled adults back into higher education in the 1970's. The women's movement opened doors for women to continue their education. Community colleges and universities recruited mature students because of a shrinking number of traditional aged college students. Also, growth in adult literacy education was due to the economic advantages of further education for adults.

During the 1980's policymakers debated the role of adult literacy education in helping welfare recipients make the transition from... The Human Capital Development (HCD) strategy focuses on the development of basic academic skills to obtain stable and better employment opportunities, (*U.S Department of Education,* 2002). The HCD strategy was evidenced in several demonstration projects, in the Family Support Act of 1988, and in the Workforce Investment Act, which mandated a state plan for adult literacy education and family literacy. This legislation placed a greater emphasis on adult literacy education than any previous welfare program.

Also at this time, a mismatch between worker skills and the job demands in the workplace, termed a job-skills gap, became apparent (Chisman & Campbell, 1990). The workplace was requiring higher order skills of entry level workers, and workers were under-prepared. Business leaders became increasing involved in education by forming groups to lobby policymakers for change (Reyes, Wagstaff, & Fusarelli, 1999).There

were many reports that served as wake-up calls to business, education, and government including *Workforce 2000* (Johnston & Packer, 1987), *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), *The Fourth R, Workplace Readiness* (National Alliance of Business, 1987), *Jumpstart: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy,* (Chisman, 1989), *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* (Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990). Workforce education became a focus for many employers in the 1980's and 1990's (Chisman, 1989). Alliances between employers and vocational schools and community colleges were developed in some areas in order to better prepare employees for the changing demands of the workforce (Dreyfuss, 1990).

As a result of the heightened interest in improving America's global competitiveness, in 1990, President Bush and the nation's governors adopted the goal that all of America's adults be literate by the year 2000. The National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) was implemented in order to assess the literacy skills of adults across the country. The Texas Adult Literacy Survey (TALS) was conducted within the NALS assessment. This survey attempted to assess a person's literacy skills in English. Results from the survey categorized literacy skills into five levels (Jenkins & Kirsch, 1994). The TALS revealed the low literacy status that existed in Texas, showing that 30 percent of the respondents demonstrated skills at the lowest literacy level, and 26 percent more were at level 2. Texas residents scored lower than other adults in the South and lower than adults nationwide (Jenkins & Kirsch, 1994, p.60).

In the early 1990's, a different strategy, Labor Force Attachment (LFA) or 'work first' became popular. LFA programs focus on job search skills, and quick employment. Research has shown that quick entry into the labor force can yield long-term self-sufficiency (*U.S. Department of Education,* 2002).

The National Literacy Act (NLA) of 1991, focused on the importance of adult literacy education for work force development to ensure America's economic success in the new globally competitive economy (Sticht, 2002). The National Literacy Act of 1991 defined literacy as having the ability to write, read, speak English, compute and solve problems to achieve and function in a job and in society, (National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), 2000).

The National Literacy Survey of 1992 reported that more that 20 percent of adults read at or below a fifth-grade level, and that over 40 million Americans age sixteen and older had significant literacy needs, (NIFL, 2000). The National Literacy Survey also found that people with the lowest literacy skills were most likely to live in poverty, receive federal aid, and be unemployed or under employed. Literacy and educational achievement are important on a personal level because research has shown a strong link between the educational achievement of a parent and child (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

The NLA was incorporated into the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998 as Title II: The Adult Literacy Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). The AEFLA is the source of the federal guidelines for adult literacy education programs that receive federal funds, requiring accountability and reporting. The key principles of the AEFLA

are: “streamlining services, empowering individuals, universal access, increased accountability, new roles for local boards, state and local flexibility, and improved youth programs” (TEA, 2002).

Other legislation that impacted adult literacy education in the 1990’s was the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, or Welfare-to-Work Act. This legislation refocused the welfare efforts in the United States on moving people from welfare to work (NIFL, 2003). A lack of education or low basic skills was an obstacle to employment for many adults receiving welfare. This legislation provided sanctions for not obtaining employment, including mandatory attendance of adults in education classes. Non-compliance could lead to an individual’s or family’s loss of welfare benefits (NIFL, 2003).

The Adult Literacy Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act) mandated a state plan for adult literacy education and family literacy. The Texas State Plan for adult literacy education and family literacy was developed as a five-year plan from July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2004. The legislation also required a performance accountability system and a program of staff development for all adult literacy education programs. The Workforce Investment Act also emphasized family literacy and included requirements for states to fund programs based on “direct and equitable access” (Texas Education Agency, 2002). The changes that this legislation introduced including performance accountability, a staff development program and competitive awards for program funding have greatly increased the demands on program administrators.

Programs and Participants in Texas

The five-year Texas state plan for the adult education division of the Texas Education Agency for July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2004 presented the vision statement "every Texan regardless of age, is entitled to a basic education." The mission statement was "to ensure that all adults who live in Texas have the skills necessary to function effectively in their personal and family lives, in the workplace, and in the community" (TEA, 2001).

Adult literacy education describes a broad range of activities that may occur in the workplace, a social setting, or a classroom. The distinctions of formal, informal, and non-formal have been used to categorize the types of adult literacy education (Courtney, 1989). In the context of this dissertation, adult literacy education programs in Texas are the educational programs that receive funding from the Texas Education Agency for adult learners. Programs receive federal funding through the TEA from Title II of the federal Workforce Investment Act. At the time of this study there were a total of fifty-six local adult literacy education programs in Texas.

Adult literacy education programs concentrate on providing English reading and writing skills and functional math skills to out-of-school adults on the students' academic level ranging from no literacy to the equivalent of high school level. Programs may be provided by community-based organizations, school districts, community colleges or regional educational service centers.

In his book, *Leading from the Middle: The State Role in Adult Education & Literacy* (Chisman, 2002), emphasized the importance of the state's role in the success

of adult literacy education in the United States. The federal government distributes about $575 million annually in funding to the states with the requirement that states match their allotments with 25 percent of non-federal resources. Chisman (2002) noted that a state's political and fiscal commitments to adult education vary greatly. Some large states such as New York, Florida, and California exceed the required matching contributions. Unfortunately, Texas is noted as not exceeding the required 25 percent contribution.

Adequate funding for adult literacy education programs is a persistent problem (Boone, 1985). Increasing demands have been placed on adult educators and social service agents to eradicate illiteracy and simultaneously the resources to do the job have been decreasing (Amstutz & Sheared, 2000). There is a great disparity between public school funding and adult literacy education funding. Expenditures in the United States in 2001 per student in higher education exceeded $16,000, and in the K-12 system they exceeded, $7,500, yet less that $400 per student was spent per adult literacy education student annually (Sticht, 2001).

In the state of Texas, where the national educational movement to 'leave no child behind' was conceived by President George W. Bush's administration when he was Governor from 1995 to 2000, school funding for all levels of students has suffered. In the past several years, the federal education budget has also experienced cutbacks. Dr. Don Seaman, Professor Emeritus, Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development, Texas A&M University, stated that "state funding for adult literacy education in Texas has not increased in fourteen years" (D. Seaman,

personal communication, June 9, 2003). The state role in adult literacy education is indispensable and is in need of administrative resources, management expertise, strong leadership, and strategic planning to meet the needs of the state and nation (Chisman, 2002).

Participation in the National Reporting System (NRS) is required of state programs in order to receive federal funds. The NRS is an accountability system that includes a set of student measures to assess the impact of adult basic education instruction (TEA, 2002). Program administrators are responsible for implementing and maintaining the data for their program (TEA, 2001).

The Texas statewide report for the 2000-2001 school year for regular adult literacy education programs that were funded by TEA state and federal funds showed that of the 103,204 participants, approximately 73 percent were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (Texas Education Agency, 2002). Of the total enrollment, approximately 40 percent were Hispanic or Latino between the ages of 25 and 44, and of this group 65 percent were female and 35 percent were male.

Sheila Rosenberg (2002), Senior Director of the division of Adult and Community Education for the Texas Education Agency, noted that the United States March 2002 Census information showed that the immigrant population has increased since 1990, comprising 10.4 percent of the population. The immigrant population is for the most part, non- native English speaking, consisting of 51 percent Hispanic, 25 percent Asian, and 24 percent other groups. Rosenberg called attention to the challenge

for adult literacy education programs to meet the needs of the growing ESL population and the importance of training and recruiting ESL instructors.

The Texas Adult Literacy Survey (TALS) conducted in 1992 reported that 30 percent of adult respondents in Texas demonstrated skills in the lowest level on the literacy proficiency scale. There is a relationship between low level literacy skills and poverty rates (Amstutz & Sheared, 2000). Social and economic ills such as youth dropout rates, welfare dependency, and youth joblessness have been correlated to low levels of literacy (Quigley, 1997).The population of adults in Texas who need improved literacy skills is rising and adult literacy education programs need to be able to meet these needs.

Administration of Adult Literacy Education

The terms administration, management, and leadership are frequently used interchangeably in describing the vitally important role of the adult literacy education program director (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). Depending on the specific program, the role of a director of program of adult literacy education can be compared to the role of a school principal, a superintendent, or the role of a non-profit organization's director. *Texas Adult Education: Soaring into the 21st Century Administrator's Manual* (TEA, 2001) states that the roles of leader, manager, and educator are all a part of the program administrator's job.

Knox (1979) stated that the basic functions of leadership are to "work with and through others to achieve agreement on important goals and encouraging them to make

contributions to that end" (p.25). Adult literacy education administrative leadership also includes dealing with organizational stability and change (Knox, 1979). Galbraith, Sisco & Guglielmino (2001) stated that "the success of adult, community and continuing education organizations depends upon the skill, knowledge, and political savvy of individuals who hold the administrative roles" (p.1).

Administrators in the adult, community, and continuing education programs are for the most part guided by general knowledge, literature, and practices from related fields (Galbraith, et al., 2001). University programs in adult, community, and continuing education predominantly use non-context specific administrative literature to educate their students about how to be administrators (Galbraith, et al., 2001). Kowalski (1988) stated that adult literacy education has some unique aspects such as its settings and adult student population. Therefore, administrators require specialized preparation in areas such as program planning (p.6).

There has been limited attention dedicated to the administrative process in adult literacy education literature (Galbraith, et al., 2001; Courtenay, 1990). The fact that more information is needed regarding the job competencies of program managers was a conclusion in the State Policy Update "Profession Development for Adult literacy education" by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) (Tolbert, 2001). Only limited research had been done to define the functions and job competencies and of an adult literacy education director (Sork & Buskey, 1986; Courtenay, 1990).

Administrative Functions

Different sources have offered summaries of what functions are necessary in the administration of adult literacy education (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). These functions are the necessary elements that the administrator puts into place to make the organization successful (Galbraith, et al., 2001). Courtenay's (1990) literature review identified nine administrative functions of adult literacy education. Of the seventy-five sources Courtenay reviewed, the topics of leadership, organizing, and structuring appeared most frequently. Leadership is often indicated as the most critical function of the administrator (Courtenay, 1990).The functions least discussed in the literature were goals and objectives, philosophy and mission, and evaluation. Other administrative functions covered in the literature included planning, staffing, budgeting, and marketing.

Knox (1991) described the key administrative functions of adult literacy education to be decision making, leadership, program development, attracting participants, staffing, acquiring resources, coordination, and external relations. Smith and Offerman (1989) designed a framework for the management of adult literacy education programs based on four main tasks. They stated that in order of importance the tasks of management are programming, financing, staffing, and marketing. Three primary functions of management included in this plan are planning, organizing, and evaluation. These three functions of management are described as being interwoven and simultaneous (Smith & Offerman, 1989).

Job Skills and Competencies

Galbraith, Sisco and Guglielmino (2001) identified certain skills as necessary for adult literacy education program directors to carry out the functions of their job. These skills were perspective and purpose, community knowledge, communication and coordination, programming, working with groups, technology, and critical thinking (pp.11-15). Knowles (1980) discussed skills and characteristics he observed that administrators should possess including being a good listener, having deep commitment, respecting adults' capacity to be self-directed, engaging in continuing education themselves.

The Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning (TCALL) publication; *New Beginnings: Creating and Establishing an Adult Literacy Program* (2002), recommends that certain qualities are necessary for the executive director of a literacy program to possess. As the manager of the program's daily activities, decision-making, and program management issues, the program director should be experienced in adult education and have leadership, interpersonal skills, and organizational skills. Other qualities that the TCALL report states the program manager should have are to have a record of fiscal responsibility and to be well-connected in the community.

As a result of recent research regarding job competencies for adult literacy program administrators titled *Management Competencies and Sample Indicators for the Improvement of Adult Education Programs (U.S. Department of Education,* 2001), seven categories of competencies for effective performance were developed; each is listed here with a sample performance indicator (p.5):

Leadership Skills. Effective leaders are able to direct staff and delegate authority. Leaders initiate and promote the change process. They possess positive interpersonal skills, demonstrate professional behavior, and work towards continuous program improvement.

Instructional Leadership. Effective administrators provide instructional leadership, overseeing the educational process and ensuring that the instructional program is serving the needs of the learners and the broader community in a resource-limited environment.

Resource Management and Allocation. It is not uncommon for adult education to have limited resources. Program administrators effectively manage available resources and seek additional resources to keep the program running efficiently.

Staff Supervision. Effective supervision ensures that processes are in place for hiring, evaluating, and terminating staff and for providing the support and guidance to help staff attain the expected levels of competence.

Program Monitoring and Reporting. Administrators systematically monitor and evaluate staff, program procedures, and student progress. Data obtained from monitoring and assessment are used for continuous program improvement, accountability, and the identification of needed resources. Procedures for collecting, documenting, and dissemination of information result in timely and accurate data.

Professional Development Practices. Professional development is an essential part of program improvement for both instructors and administrators. Effective administrators pursue their own learning and recognize the importance of having staff that are up-to-date on best practices and possess knowledge of content areas. Program administrators encourage staff to identify their strengths and areas for improvement related to the program's mission and goals. In addition, they provide support for professional development by offering trainings and resources based on staff needs.

Community Collaboration. Effective administrators build relationships with the community to improve the delivery of services. They work collaboratively to increase resources, provide service for learners, and advocate for the adult education community.

Adult literacy programs differ greatly. Therefore, the characteristics and the needs of the programs and administrators vary greatly as well. These competencies have many uses including aiding in developing guidelines for program planning and

evaluation, job descriptions, recruiting and hiring administrators, and for professional development (*U.S. Department of Education*, 2001).

Challenges for Adult Literacy Programs in Texas

Texas Adult Education: Soaring into the 21st Century Administrator's Manual (TEA, 2001, p.11) stated that "quality management must precede quality instruction." Leaders and managers in adult literacy education face infinite challenges, which include:

- Securing and allocating resources to address competing priorities;
- Developing and promoting the organization's mission, goals, and objectives;
- Making increasingly complex technology accessible;
- Meeting the needs of diverse student population;
- Employing and supervising an ever-changing instructional staff;
- Initiating and advocating for changes that promote program improvement;
- Advocating for the field of adult literacy education;
- Responding to the changing demands for program accountability;
- Encouraging problem solving and team building among staff; and
- Collaboration with other agencies to provide comprehensive delivery of services", (p.11).

In addition to all of these challenges, it is noted that often administrators are promoted from teaching positions and may be unprepared for the administration and management responsibilities of their jobs (Texas Education Agency, 2001).

Stress and Coping in General

In the past decade, interest in the concept of stress and research on stress has reached an all time high (Goldberger & Breznitz, 1993). The origin of the term "stress" can be traced back to the fourteenth century as a non-technical term to refer to hardship or adversity. In the late seventeenth century, physicist Robert Hooke formulated an engineering analysis of stress (Lazarus, 1999). Hooke analyzed how to design bridges to

carry heavy loads. Hooke used the concepts of load (external forces), stress (the area where the load is applied), and strain (the deformation of the structure cause by the load and stress). This model greatly influenced the formulation of stress theory as we know it.

Interest in the topic of psychological stress rose after the two world wars, especially in the late 1940's (Lazarus, 1999). A large number of soldiers exposed to battle conditions developed symptoms of stress, ranging from mild anxiety to more debilitating disorders. As research in the field of psychology progressed, there was an evolution of understanding the disorders associated with battle stress. The emotional problems that developed were presumed to be due to stress. Terminology developed from the 'shell shock' of World War I, to the 'combat fatigue' of World War II, and 'posttraumatic stress disorder' of the Vietnam War (Lazarus, 1999). From World War I through the Vietnam War, military laboratories conducted research to understand the basics of how stress works. These findings fueled the growth of the stress industry.

Military psychology research was implemented in the 1940's by the U.S. military to learn two things. First, the military wanted to find out what kind of person would be resistant to battle stress. Second, psychologists wanted to know how to train people to cope with battle stress and its negative effects (Lazarus, 1999). After World War II, interest in stress spread from military concerns to our everyday lives. Heightened stress could be attributed to the technological advancements of the world that had changed the face of war to a 'total war.' For the first time, anyone was a potential war victim. It was realized that stress was a problem in peacetime, in relationships, home job or school.

Stress became a major topic in the social and biological sciences and knowledge about it spread by the media began to reach the public (Lazarus, 1999).

Stress research has developed in four different disciplines; medicine, sociology, management, and psychology (Cummings and Cooper, 1998). Each discipline has its own paradigm and research differences which lead to difficulties in comparing stress theories and research (Le Fevre, Matheny, & Kolt, 2003). Goldberger & Breznitz, (1993) stated that the key element in the study of stress is the individual's point of view experiencing stress.

The term 'stress' became a dominant term for research in areas that reflected the problems of daily life, such as anxiety, depression, frustration, alienation, and emotional distress (Lazarus, 1999). Since Seyle first used the term 'stress' there has been confusion and debate about its definition (Le Fevre, et al., 2003)). There are various definitions of stress. Some focus on the stimulus or stressor, other definitions focus on the response, the mental and physical reaction caused by the stressor, physical reactions and outcomes (Lazarus, 1999; Selye, 1993; Le Fevre, et al., 2003). Selye (1987) defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand place upon it" (p.17). Palmer, Cooper and Thomas (2003) stated that "stress occurs when the perceived pressure exceeds your perceived ability to cope" (p.2). There are commonalities in all of these definitions of stress because any situation that puts demands on one's adaptability engages the stress phenomenon (Selye, 1993).

One of the most important modern theories of psychological stress was published by Hans Selye in 1956, in his book *The Stress of Life* (Lazarus, 1999). Seyle

was the first researcher to use the term “stress” to describe physical and psychological responses to react to adverse conditions. Selye described the concept of stress using the terms distress (bad stress) and eustress (good stress). The degree of demand is fundamental in Seyle’s explanation of distress. (Le Fevre, et al., 2003). Distress is represented by either too much or too little demand. A moderate level of demand is eustress.

Selye’s general adaptation syndrome (GAS) described how the body responds to threats to its integrity (Lazarus, 1999). The three stages of GAS are:

- alarm reaction: the body moves to a state of neuro-chemical alert
- resistance: the body is activated to protect itself
- exhaustion: fatigue that is reached if the stress is prolonged

Selye’s GAS theory provides information on how stressors affect the body’s nervous system, but it does not delineate what comprises a stressful event (Goldberger & Breznitz, 1993).

Physiological responses to stress are referred to as the ‘fight or flight’ response (Palmer, Cooper & Thomas, 2003; Pynoos, Sorenson, & Steinberg, 1993). The fight or flight response is the body reacting to danger or the need to cope by reacting (Zwickel, 1994). Sustained high levels of stress can lead to serious health conditions including hypertension, heart attack, cancer, and psychological illnesses such as depression or breakdowns (Palmer, et al., 2003).

Research by Richard Lazarus contrasts Seyle’s physiological (response) based research by focusing on the stimulus and cognitive appraisal. Lazarus’ research

presumes that there are specific kinds of information that are influential in appraising a stimulus as a stressor (Goldberger & Breznitz, 1993). Lazarus determined that there are four categories of environmental variables that influence stress and emotion; demands, constraints, opportunities, and culture. These four variables influence a person's reaction through the process of cognitive appraisal (Lazarus, 1999). Appraisal theory is based on the idea that people are constantly appraising their relationships with the environment to check their well-being (Lazarus, 1999). This appraisal can be either deliberate and conscious or intuitive and unconscious.

Two individuals exposed to the same stimuli could have very different responses due to the objective nature of the variables (Sutherland & Cooper, 1990). People experience stress differently for several reasons which may include internal and external factors. Internal factors may be temperament, age, gender, and past experiences. External factors that may affect reactions to stress include climate, diet, and medications. Behavioral responses to stress also vary as people choose behaviors that they think will help them cope (Zwickel, 1994).

Lazarus (1999) stated that the concepts of stress and coping belong together as a conceptual unit of the emotional process (p.37). Coping is an essential part of the emotion process and the emotional life (Lazarus, 1999). Bretnitz & Goldberger (1993) referred to coping as a central element to the adaptational equation (p.3). Coping is an effort to manage psychological stress (Lazarus, 1999). Siegrist (2001) defined coping mechanisms as efforts on the behavioral, cognitive, affective or motivational levels by a person to reverse a threat or to meet the demands of a stressor (p.53).

Stress management, that is undertaken to maintain a healthy and productive level of stimulation, has been a popular theme in wellness programs, continuing education courses and self help books over the past two decades (Brock & Grady, 2002; Palmer, et al., 2003). Zwickel (1994) recommended two methods of coping with stress. First, respond directly to the stressor and try to change the situation or deal with the person causing the stress. Second, reduce the effects of stress on your body and mind. Recommended ways to reduce mental and physical stress are through meditation, yoga, visualization, breathing techniques, escape from stressors, vigorous exercise, sports or activities that require deep concentration (Zwickel, 1994, pp.30-31).

Stress can be caused by anything that stimulates us; it is a part of life. Some amount of stress can be stimulating, too much can be destructive. Analysis of it in our everyday lives is prevalent in our society. The high profile nature of the subject of stress is evidence that research is important for our social, physiological, and psychological health (Lazarus, 1999).

Occupational Stress

Stress that occurs due to a person's employment is termed occupational stress. The terms work stress, job stress, or occupational stress are used interchangeably (Dollard, 2003). Employers and governments have had increasing concern about occupational stress for over twenty years (Le Fevre, et al., 2003). In the past decade, effects of economic globalization and rapid technological changes have resulted in increased workloads and a faster pace in the work place (Dollard, 2003). Modern trends

such as organizational downsizing, competition for funding, and high demand jobs have led to rising occupational stress (Dollard, 2003).

The cost of occupational stress is a recognized problem around the world (Dollard, 2003). The cost of occupational stress in the United States is estimated to range between 200 and 300 billion dollars annually (Le Fevre et al., 2003; Verespej, 2000). One study in the United States revealed that 54 percent of absence from work is estimated to be stress-related (Elkin & Rosch, 1990). Another report was that 75 percent to 90 percent of physician visits are estimated to be for stress-related complaints and illnesses (Verespej, 2000). Unmanaged stress for employees can result in short-and-long-term negative health effects including exhaustion, physical pain, depression, sleep disturbances, and even death (Brock & Grady, 2002; Le Fevre et al., 2003). Employers risk the potential loss of talented, trained employees due to occupational stress and its results. Another concern is the employer's risk of being held legally liable for damages that result from stress in the workplace (Le Fevre et al., 2003).

There are a variety of work stress models and theories. These explanations of work stress differ according to the emphasis for the induction of stress and the different outcomes for the management of stress (Le Fevre et al., 2003; Dollard, 2003). Theories of work stress have been categorized by as either interactional or transactional (Cox, Griffiths, & Rial-Gonzalez, 2000). Interactional theories of stress focus on the structural features of the person's interaction with their work environment. Transactional theories of stress focus on the person's emotional reactions and cognitive processes related to their environment.

One general theory of occupational stress is the effort-reward imbalance model. This model emphasizes the link between self-regulatory needs of the worker and the social opportunity structure (Siegrist, 2001, p.54). Effort reward imbalance is prevalent in service occupations. Another accepted general theory of occupational stress is the demand control model. Seigrist (2001) stated that the demand control model claims that a high level of psychological demands and a low level of authority and skill utilization cause strain that leads to susceptibility to illness (p.60).

The causes and characteristics of occupational stress have been the topic of much research. Sutherland and Cooper (1988, pp.3-23) devised five categories of potential sources of psychosocial and occupational stress.

1. *Factors intrinsic to the job*: Poor physical working conditions, work overload, pressures of new technology, time pressures
2. *Role in the Organization*: Role ambiguity or conflict due to conflicting demands; responsibility to others; relationships with others, boundary conflicts.
3. *Career Development*: Job insecurity, over promotion or under promotion.
4. *Relationships at work*: Poor relations with boss or other colleagues; difficulties delegating responsibility.
5. *Organizational structure and climate*: Lack of participation in decision-making, office politics, restrictions on behavior, social support.

Other factors that are potential stressors include life events that may cause stress such as home, family and financial demands, marital problems, and conflicts between job and family demands (Sutherland & Cooper, 1988).

Dollard (2003, p.6) presented a categorical matrix adapted from Cox, et al., (2000) to define the stressful characteristics of work, which included these job characteristics, social and individual components:

Job Characteristics and Nature of Work

Job Contents/demands: High physical, mental and/or emotional demands, high uncertainty, continuous exposure to people through work
Workload/workplace: Work overload, pressured deadlines
Work schedule: Shift working, inflexible work schedules, unpredictable hours, long or unsocial hours
Job Control: Low participation in decision making, lack of control over workloads
Physical environment: Inadequate or faulty equipment, poor environmental conditions

Social and Organisational Context of Work

Organisational Culture: Poor communication, low levels of support for problem-solving and personal development, lack of definition on organisational objectives
Interpersonal relationships at work: Social or physical isolation, poor relationships with superiors, interpersonal conflict, lack of social support.
Role in organization: Role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility
Career development: Career stagnation and uncertainty, under promotion or over promotion, poor pay, job insecurity, low social value of work

Individual Risk Factors

Individual differences: Coping styles, personality, hardiness
Home-work interface: Conflicting demand of work and home low support at home, duel career problems

An individual's personal characteristics are an important part of the stress interaction. Personality traits, behaviors, attitudes, needs, values, past experiences, life circumstances, and abilities all influence the impact of a stressor. Age and health are also important characteristics that modify responses to stress (Sutherland & Cooper, 1988). Some research has indicated that the factors of gender and ethnicity impact responses to stress, particularly if the individual has experienced discrimination or prejudice (Fielden & Davidson, 2001; Torelli & Gmelch, 1993; Sutherland & Cooper, 1988).

Stress and Coping in Educational Administration

School administrators as the leaders of educational programs experience stress in their occupations similar to the stress that corporate executives experience (Smith, 2001). Much has been written about the intense job stress that school principals, administrators, and superintendents may undergo due to the demands of their positions (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Brock & Grady, 2002; Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000; Gmelch, 1996). Many aspects of managing and delivering adult education programs are similar to the responsibilities of a corporate executive, school superintendent or school principal.

An adult literacy education program director is usually responsible for all aspects of their programs including planning, administrative management, leadership, financial, personnel, public relations, student assessment, legal considerations, evaluation, professional development, and compliance with state and federal requirements (Merriam & Brockett, 1997; Galbraith, et al., 2001; TEA, 2001). Similar job responsibilities of school superintendents and adult literacy education program directors link the types of occupational stressors that these occupations have.

In *The Study of the American School Superintendency 2000* (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000) the authors stated that though a certain amount of stress is present in any professional position this is especially true in the superintendency due to the pressures caused by lack of adequate funding, personnel issues, and state mandates. The fact that stress is a serious problem for school administrators was proven in a nationwide study that found that over 50 percent of schools superintendents indicated a ‘considerable’ or

'very great' perceived stress level (Glass, et al., 2000). Research regarding occupational stress perceived by superintendents in Texas (Smith, 2001), female superintendents in Texas (Skrobarcek, 1998), alternative school principals in Texas (McLaughlin, 1998), and middle school administrators (Solis, 1986) all determined that occupational stress is prevalent in these educational administrative positions.

Occupational stress has also been identified as a problem for school principals. *Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Leadership for the 21st Initiative: A Report of the Task Force on the Principalship* (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000), reported that intense job stress, and excessive time requirements are some of the negative occupational features of a school principal who as a middle manager is responsible for every aspect of school performance and operations. Studies regarding the occupational stress of teachers show stressors that are similar to other educational occupations. Conflicting demands by supervisors, work overload, poor physical working conditions, and fiscal cutbacks are some stressors that recent research has indicated as leading sources of teacher stress (Travers, 2001; Greenglass & Burke, 2003;). Travers (2001) stated that the concepts of teaching and stress are almost synonymous.

Educational administrators have experienced profound change in their occupations (Brock & Grady, 2002). Technology has brought about many changes in job requirements and work load. Rapid and frequent changes can cause resistance and frustration (Brock & Grady, 2002). The trend of school reform that started in public schools in the 1980's and 1990's has trickled down to adult literacy education in the past decade. Increased accountability, student assessments, state and federal reporting, and

the ever present budget cuts are all changes that can heighten the stress level in an already stressful occupation.

Travers (2001) researched stress in teaching and noted that greater accountability and public assessment have resulted in disillusionment among teachers. Research regarding occupational stress and the role of educational administrators who have dual responsibilities of managing people and program finances found that work overload and handling relationships with staff were the primary sources of stress (Cooper & Kelly, 1993).

The important reoccurring themes in analyses of occupational stress characteristics such as work overload, time pressures, conflicting demands due to role ambiguity, poor environmental conditions, and poor communication with superiors are all potential problems for educational administrators due to the nature of the high demands of their occupation (Dollard, 2003; Cox, et al., 2000; Sutherland & Cooper, 1988). Excessive work stress and relentless work demands are reasons for teacher burnout (Travers, 2001).

Occupational burnout is the outcome of excessive stress. Burnout, an extreme reaction to stress, is described as extreme emotional exhaustion that may lead to apathy, negativity, alienation from work, and a diminished quality of work (Travers, 2001; Brock & Grady, 2002). Physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual symptoms may affect a person undergoing burnout. Burn out is contagious. A stress-filled school leader creates a stress-filled atmosphere with a high incidence of teacher burnout (Grady

& Burns, 2002). Changes in how people respond to stress can prevent burnout and its negative effects (Gmelch, 1996; Brock & Grady, 2002).

Brock & Grady (2002) recommended some positive responses to stress for school leaders, including some psychological and behavioral responses (p.119). Psychological ways to cope with stress are to develop an internal locus of control, control one's own emotions, adjust personal attitudes, and perspectives. Behavioral ways of coping with stress are to manage time effectively, delegate, have excellent interpersonal skills, maintain good nutrition, rest, pray, meditate, exercise, socialize with friends, and talk with family (Brock & Grady, 2002).

Summary

The literature reviewed for this study focused on six areas: (1) the background and history of American adult literacy education, (2) adult literacy education participants and programs in Texas, (3) administration of adult literacy education, (4) stress and coping in general, (5) occupational stress, and (6) stress and coping in educational administration. The literature regarding the history of American adult literacy education included a review of the various types of literacy education and the historical changes that precipitated the changes in education over the last three centuries. The review of literature about the participants and programs in Texas included descriptive information about the programs and demographic information about the participants. Literature reviewed regarding the administration of adult literacy education included job functions and competencies of program administrators. The section on stress and coping provided

a review of the general definitions and basic theories of stress and coping. Literature reviewed about occupational stress identified the definition and theories of occupational stress, and the effects of stress. The review of the literature about stress and coping in educational administration provided a review of a specific nature of job-related stress and the coping mechanisms used to deal with occupational stress for education professionals.

The body of research available regarding adult literacy program administrators is relatively recent and is mainly descriptive in nature. The topic of occupational stress has been well researched, as well as the effects of occupational stress for managers and educators. The information complied in this literature review suggests a strong basis for the study of occupational stressors that affect adult literacy program directors, and the coping mechanisms they used to deal with stress. Identification of stressors and coping mechanisms for this group will help to understand the challenges of this occupation as well as guide professional development.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Following a review of the literature, this study was designed to determine the occupational stressors and coping mechanisms as perceived by the directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas. Secondly, a determination was made regarding whether or not a relationship exists between specific demographic variables and occupational stressors and coping mechanisms. A questionnaire was adapted and utilized from a previous research study (Smith, 2001). The data were analyzed to determine the nature and significance of the relationship between the variables in the study. The methodology utilized in the study is discussed in detail in this chapter.

Population

The population for this study was all 56 directors of adult literacy education programs funded by the Division of Adult and Community Education of the Texas Education Agency, as of May 31, 2002. Some directors had a single county consisting of a large city to administer, such as Austin or Dallas, whereas others managed multi-county programs, mostly rural in nature.

Procedures

Each adult literacy education program director in Texas was mailed the survey which was adapted from *The School Superintendent Stress and Coping Questionnaire*

(Smith, 2001). The mailing list was obtained from the Texas Education Agency website and was cross referenced with information from the Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning at Texas A&M University (TCALL). The survey was accompanied by a cover letter that assured confidentiality for the participants, and included specific instructions for the participants to return the completed survey in the return addressed envelope. The administration of the survey occurred in June and July, 2002, the summary of the return rate is shown in Table 1. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a follow up letter was sent with another copy of the survey to program directors who did not return the initial survey. After two additional weeks, an e-mail was sent to the program directors who had not responded. Then, a third survey was sent to non-responders. Participants were notified that their consent to participate was assumed by the completion and return of this survey. The participant's name was not on the survey; a number was assigned to each form for tracking purposes. The final return rate, by August 1, 2002, was 75 percent, with 42 of the 56 adult literacy education program directors responding.

Table 1

Summary of Return Rate for Occupational Stressor and Stress-Coping Questionnaire Submitted to Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Item	N	Percent
Questionnaires returned after first mailing	28	50.0
Questionnaires returned after second mailing	12	21.4
Questionnaires returned after third mailing	2	3.6
Questionnaires never returned	14	25.0
Total Questionnaires	56	100.0

Instrumentation

The instrument that was used for data collection was adapted from *The School Superintendent Stress and Coping Questionnaire* validated by Terry Smith (2001) for a dissertation at Texas A&M University for research of occupational stressors and coping mechanisms as perceived by superintendents in the Education Service Center, Region 13, Texas. Dr. Smith's instrument, *The School Superintendent Stressor and Coping Questionnaire* was derived from *The Stress and Coping Survey* (Williams, 1985), originally developed and validated by Dorothy Ellen Williams, for a dissertation regarding occupational stressors and coping mechanisms as perceived by middle-school administrators. *The Stress and Coping Survey* was also used by Skrobarcek (1998) with female school superintendents and McLaughlin (1998) with alternative high school principals.

The School Superintendent Stressor and Coping Questionnaire was reviewed by the researcher, Dr. Don Seaman, and Dr. Walter Stenning. Each item on the questionnaire was considered for its appropriateness and for the population of adult education literacy program directors. According to the reviewers, the instrument was considered to be a good fit for this population, except for three questions about stressors that were more specific for traditional school superintendents. Those questions were eliminated. One question regarding funding was added, and questions about the participant's demographic information were adjusted to fit this population.

The survey had three sections; first, the stressor inventory which consisted of forty questions with four-point Likert scale answers, and three questions that assessed

stress components also with four-point Likert scale answers. There was one question regarding the overall stress level with a ten-point Likert option for the answer. Also, there was one question that was open ended, allowing the participant to explain other stressors they may encounter on the job. The second section regarded coping mechanisms and had nineteen questions with four-point Likert scale answers, and one optional question that was short answer allowing the participant to add other coping strategies they may use. Also, in the second section there was a question about whether the 2002-2003 budget allocation had been received at the time the administrator completed the survey. The third section included eleven questions about demographic factors, such as age, gender, career and educational data.

Data Analysis

The results of this study were reported using quantitative methods as outlined in *Educational Research: An Introduction, 7th ed.* (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003) and *Basic Statistics: Tales of Distributions 7th ed.* (Spatz, 2001).The data collected with the survey were analyzed with a statistical analysis computer software program (SPSS 11.0, 2002) to obtain an analysis of information regarding the demographics and occupational stressors and coping mechanisms perceived by directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas. Results of the study were reported using numerical and graphical techniques to report descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages. Multiple displays such as tables, charts, and graphs will be used to present findings.

Analysis and interpretation of the data followed the principles prescribed in by *Educational Research: An Introduction, 7th ed.* (Gall, et al., 2003) and *Basic Statistics: Tales of Distributions 7th ed.* (Spatz, 2001). Several statistical procedures were performed to answer the research questions. These procedures included frequencies, mean scores, and correlations that were also used for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the data. A Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test for the degree of relationship between occupational stressors and stress-coping mechanisms and the selected demographic variables. An alpha level of .05 was used to establish the level of significance. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also computed for certain variables to test for significant differences in answers to questions of demographically different sub-groups within the population that were surveyed. Results from the study were reported using numerical and graphical techniques.

Specific statistical procedures were used to analyze data for each research question. The procedures were chosen for their applicability to the data as well as to the research objective. Treatment of all data was restricted to the four research questions of this study. The first two research questions were as follows:

1. What is the perceived general stress level of adult literacy education program directors?

2. What are the occupational stressors related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

To answer question one, the researcher calculated the frequencies and mean for the questionnaire item in which the participants indicated their perceived stress level on

a scale of 1 to 10. On the scale, 0 represented no stress, 5 represented moderate stress, and 10 represented severe stress. Also, three questions that dealt with stress components were analyzed in order to answer question one.

To answer question two, the researcher calculated the frequencies of all of the 40 stressors and all 19 coping mechanisms for the population participants. The means for the 40 stressors and all 19 coping mechanisms were also calculated. The high and low extremes of the data for the stressors for the total group were analyzed. This procedure is discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV of this study.

The third research question was:

3. What are the stress-coping mechanisms related to job performance as perceived adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

To determine the relationship between stressors and coping mechanisms, the researcher used a Pearson product-moment correlation to compare all 43 stressors by all 19 coping mechanisms (Spatz, 2001). The high and low extremes of the data for the coping mechanisms for the total group were analyzed. This procedure is discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV of this study.

The fourth research question was:

4. To what degree do demographic variables impact the perceived occupational stressors and the coping mechanisms identified by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on each variable for each stressor and coping mechanism. Variables with significant differences for the means at

the $p < .05$ level were identified. A Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test for the degree of relationship between occupational stressors and stress-coping mechanisms, and the selected demographic variables. An alpha level of .05 was used to establish the level of significance. This procedure is discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV of this study.

In summary, the study population consisted of 56 directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas. A total of 42 responses were received for a total response rate of 75 percent. The instrument used for the study was the *School Superintendent Stressor and Stress-Coping Questionnaire* (Smith, 2001), adapted by the researcher for the population of directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas. This study was primarily descriptive in nature with additional inferential analyses included. Results for the population were reported in both numerical table presentations for frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, analyses of variance, and post-hoc analysis. Analyses and interpretations of the data followed the principles detailed by Gall et al., (2003) and Spatz (2001).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The findings of the study are reported in this chapter. The first section reports the demographic findings necessary to establish the relevance of the population in this study to results of similar populations reported in the literature. The remainder of the chapter is a discussion of the data from the findings related to each of the four research questions and other findings as applicable to the study. The research questions were:

1. What is the perceived general stress level of adult literacy education program directors?
2. What are the occupational stressors related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?
3. What are the stress-coping mechanisms related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?
4. To what degree do demographic variables impact the perceived occupational stressors and the coping mechanisms identified by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

A total of 42 adult literacy education program administrators in Texas completed the questionnaire. All of the respondents were active program administrators. Data for some questions were omitted by the respondents in a few instances. These omissions account for the discrepancies in the total responses from item to another.

Demographic Data

Responses to questions related to demographic information such as gender, age, years employed in education, years employed in adult education, years employed in the current program, total years employed in adult education, years employed in supervision, and average hours worked per week suggested that the adult literacy education program administrators in the study were similar to those presented in the literature as reported in Chapter II of this study.

Age

Information about the age of the respondents is shown in Table 2. Four participants did not respond to the question about age. The age of the respondents ranged from 35 to 67 years. The mean age for the respondents was 49.66 years, with a standard deviation 11.24. Fifty percent of the 38 questionnaire completers were in the 49 to 56 year age group.

Table 2
Summary of Responses of the Frequencies and Percentages of Selected Demographic Information Regarding Age Ranges for Directors of Adult Literacy Education Directors in Texas, 2002

Years of Age	Frequency	Valid Percent
35 to 40 years	6	15.8
41 to 46 years	6	15.8
47 to 52 years	9	23.7
53 to 58 years	10	26.3
59 to 64 years	5	13.1
65 to 70 years	2	5.3
Missing	4	-
Total	42	100.0

Gender

The majority (76.9 %) of the 39 adult education literacy program administrators who answered the question about gender was female. Males accounted for 23.1 percent of the respondents, and 3 respondents did not indicate their gender. A total of 30 females and 9 males comprised the respondents, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3
Summary of Responses of the Frequencies and Percentages of Selected Demographic Information Regarding Gender of Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent
Female	30	76.9
Male	9	23.1
Missing	3	-
Total	42	100.0

Professional Tenure

Characteristics that were analyzed regarding the professional tenures of the adult literacy program directors in Texas who participated in this study are shown in Table 4. The characteristics were: the total years in the education profession, years employed in the current position, years employed in the current adult education program, total years in adult education, and years in supervision.

The first characteristic, the total years in the education profession showed that the respondents were experienced educators. Over 92 percent of the program directors had 11 or more years of experience in the education profession. Thirty-one of the

respondents (75.6%) indicated they had between 16 and 35 years of experience in the education profession.

The second characteristic of professional tenure was the number of years in the current position. This question revealed the respondents to be fairly new in their current positions. More than 56 percent of the program directors who responded had five years or less tenure in their current position. Another 23 of the program directors indicated tenure in their current position was between six and 25 years of experience. One participant had been in the current job position for 32 years. Twelve participants did not answer this question.

The third characteristic of professional tenure was the number of years in the current adult education program. This question revealed that 40.6 percent of the program directors had been in their current adult education program between one-to-five years. Fifty percent were distributed fairly evenly in the five year increments, from six-to-ten years, 11-to-15 years, 16-to-20 years and 21-to-25 years. Only three of the 32 respondents had worked in their current adult education program 26 years or more.

The fourth characteristic of professional tenure was the total years in the adult education profession. The responses were fairly evenly distributed over the span of 1 to 30 years of experience, with the most responses (23.1 %) in the 1 to 5 year range.

The fifth characteristic of professional tenure was the years in supervision. Participants indicated that they were experienced in supervision, as 27 of the 38 respondents (71.1%) indicated between 6 and 20 years of supervision. Four respondents did not complete this question.

Table 4

Summary of Responses of the Frequencies and Percentages of Selected Demographic Information Regarding Professional Tenure for Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Professional Tenure (n=42)	Frequency	Valid Percent
Total Years in the Education Profession		
1 to 5 years	1	2.4
6 to 10 years	2	4.9
11 to 15 years	4	9.8
16 to 20 years	9	22.0
21 to 25 years	8	19.5
26 to 30 years	8	19.5
31 to 35 years	6	14.6
36 to 40 years	3	7.3
Missing	1	-
Years in Current Position		
1 to 5 years	17	42.5
6 to 10 years	5	16.7
11 to 15 years	3	10.0
16 to 20 years	4	13.3
21 to 25 years	0	0
26 to 30 years	0	0
31 to 34 years	1	3.3
Missing	12	-
Years in Current Adult Education Program		
1 to 5 years	13	40.6
6 to 10 years	3	9.4
11 to 15 years	4	12.5
16 to 20 years	5	15.6
21 to 25 years	4	12.5
26 to 30 years	1	3.1
31 to 35 years	1	3.1
36 to 40 years	1	3.1
Missing	10	-

Table 4 **Continued**

Professional Tenure (n=42)		Frequency	Valid Percent
Total Years in Adult Education			
	1 to 5 years	9	23.0
	6 to 10 years	4	10.3
	11 to 15 years	6	15.4
	16 to 20 years	6	15.4
	21 to 25 years	6	15.4
	26 to 30 years	6	15.4
	31 to 35 years	2	5.1
	Missing	3	-
Years in Supervision			
	1 to 5 years	8	21.1
	6 to 10 years	6	15.8
	11 to 15 years	10	26.3
	16 to 20 years	11	29.0
	21 to 25 years	0	0.0
	26 to 30 years	2	5.2
	31 to 35 years	1	2.6
	Missing	4	-

Table 5 is a summary of the average number of hours worked per week by adult literacy education program directors in Texas. The average number of hours worked per week for program directors participating in the study was 50.33 hours with a standard deviation of 11.61 hours. The majority (82.5%) of the respondents indicated that they worked more than a regular 40 hour work week. Twenty percent of the respondents indicated they worked between 56 and 75 hours per week. Two participants did not respond.

Table 5

Summary of Responses of the Frequencies and Percentages of Selected Demographic Information for Average Hours of Work per Week for Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Average Hours Worked Per Week (n=42)	Frequency	Valid Percent
40 or less	7	17.5
41 to 45	5	12.5
46 to 50	14	35.0
51 to 55	6	15.0
56 to 60	3	7.5
61 to 65	2	5.0
66 to 70	2	5.0
71 to 75	1	2.5
Missing	2	-
Total	42	100.0

More then 76 percent of the adult literacy education program directors indicated that they had procured their current position through promotion from within the present program. Of the respondents, 15.8 percent were recruited from another program, and four did not respond to this question (Table 6).

Table 6

Summary of Responses of the Frequencies and Percentages of Selected Demographic Information Regarding Procurement of the Current Position for Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Method of Position Procurement (n=42)		Frequency	Valid Percent
Recruited From Another Program			
	Yes	6	15.8
	No	32	84.2
	Missing	4	-
Promoted From Within Present Program			
	Yes	29	76.3
	No	9	23.7
	Missing	4	-

Table 7 represents a summary of the selected demographic variables considered in this study. Means and standard deviations were calculated for seven of the demographic variables. The variable of gender and method of procurement for current position were not included due to the nominal nature of the variables.

Table 7

Summary of Responses of Means and Standard Deviation of Selected Demographic Information for Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Demographic Variables	N	Mean	SD
Age	38	49.66	11.24
Years in Education	41	23.54	8.97
Years in Current Position	30	7.15	7.36
Years in Current Adult Program	32	12.05	10.22
Total Years in Adult Education	39	15.91	9.94
Years in Supervision	38	12.66	7.65
Average Hours Worked Per Week	40	50.33	11.61

Research Question One

Research question number one addressed the general perceived stress level of program directors for adult literacy education programs in Texas. Table 8 reports the responses to the question related to overall stress. Respondents rated their perceived level of overall stress on a ten-point Likert scale. Directors were asked to rate his/her perceived general stress level on a scale of '0' to '10', where '0' represented no stress, '5' represented moderate stress, and '10' represented severe stress. The mean perceived level of overall stress for all respondents was 6.21 (Table 9), representing a higher than moderate general level of stress. The most frequently indicated level of stress was '7.' Twenty respondents, 47.7 percent of the respondents, indicated a stress level of '7' or higher. Three respondents indicated '10,' the highest level of stress which represented severe stress.

Table 8

Summary of Responses of Frequencies and Percentages of Perceived Overall General Level of Stress as Identified and Rated on a Ten-Point Likert Scale by Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Overall General Level of Stress	Frequency	Valid Percent
1 "No Stress"	1	2.4
2	0	0.0
3	4	9.5
4	2	4.8
5 "Moderate Stress"	7	16.7
6	8	19.0
7	10	23.8
8	6	14.3
9	1	2.4
10 "Severe Stress"	3	7.1
Total	42	100.0

Table 9

Summary of Responses of Means and Standard Deviations for Overall General Level of Stress as Perceived by Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Overall General Level of Stress	N	Mean	SD
Perceived Stress Rating	42	6.21	2.01

Table 10 shows the summary of other questions that addressed the perceived levels of professional, family, and personal stress of the respondents. Professional stress was indicated as ‘often’ by 42.9 percent of the respondents, and ‘sometimes’ by 31.0 percent. Family and personal stress were indicated less frequently than professional stress. Family stress was indicated as ‘often’ by 7.1 percent of the respondents. Personal stress was indicated as ‘often’ by 9.5 percent of the respondents. Table 11 summarizes the means and standard deviations of the stress components. Professional stress ranks highest of the three components. Professional stress has a mean score of 3.11, which indicates that professional stress is sometimes experienced by the respondents.

Table 10

Summary of Reponses of Frequencies and Percentages of Selected Stress Components as Identified and Ranked on a Four-Point Likert Scale According to Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Stress Component (n=42)	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)
Professional Stress	4.8	21.4	31.0	42.9
Family Stress	21.4	57.1	14.3	7.1
Personal Stress	21.4	61.9	7.1	9.5

Table 11

Summary of Reponses of Means and Standard Deviations of Selected Stress Components as Identified and Ranked on a Four-Point Likert Scale According to the Perceptions of Frequency of Effect by Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Stress Component (n=42)	Means	SD
Professional Stress	3.12	.92
Family Stress	2.07	.81
Personal Stress	2.05	.82

Table 12 summarizes the results of the product-moment correlation statistic between selected stress components and the overall general level of stress. Personal stress was determined to have a significant probability value at ($p \leq .05$) level.

Table 12

Summary of Results of the Degree of Relationship Between Selected Stress Components and the Overall General Level of Stress Based on the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the Coefficient of Determination for Occupational Stressors According to Directors of Adult Literacy Education in Texas, 2002

Overall Level of Stress	r	r^2	P
Professional Stress	0.49**	0.24	.003
Family Stress	0.43**	0.19	.005
Personal Stress	0.35*	0.12	.020

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (two tailed)

Research Question Two

Research question two addressed the occupational stressors related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas. Each respondent was asked to rate each of the listed occupational stressors according to the extent each stressor had been experienced over the current school year. Respondents rated each stressor on a 4-point Likert scale. A rating of '1' meant the particular stressor was never experienced. A rating of '2' meant the particular stressor was seldom experienced. A rating of '3' meant the particular stressor was experienced sometimes. A rating of '4' meant the particular stressor was experienced often.

Table 13 represents the percentages for occupational stressors as identified and rated according to the perceptions of directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas. The occupation stressors were ranked according to the total number of '3' responses, which represented stressors that were experienced sometimes and '4' responses, which represented stressors that were experienced often (Table 13).

In Table 14, the 40 occupational stressors are ranked in descending order according to means. The top three stressors were *Data Collection/Analysis, Statewide Accountability System, and Development/ Maintenance of School Budget*. These three stressors were selected as being experienced 'most often' by over 40 percent of the respondents. Other top stressors were *Funding Related Issues, Student Achievement, Technology Related Issues, Administration of Programs for Special Students, Selection of Faculty and Staff,* and *Dealing with Unsatisfactory Performance by Professional Staff*. The least indicated stressors were *Teacher Union Relations, Food Services Related Issues, Faculty Drug Testing,* and *Criticism in the Press*. These four stressors were selected as 'never' being experienced by over 80 percent of the respondents.

At the end of the section of the questionnaire regarding stressors, an open-ended question asked if the program directors had other stressors in addition to the ones ranked on the questionnaire. Of the respondents, 40.5 percent added some personal comments about other occupational stressors. The main themes of the comments were about stresses related to funding, difficulties dealing with the Texas Education Agency, grant writing, administrative obligations, data collection, long working hours, staff development, personnel issues, and adult education not being understood by supervisors.

Table 13

Summary of Percentages of Selected Occupational Stressors as Identified and Ranked on a Four-Point Likert Scale According to the Perceptions of Frequency of Effect by Directors of Adult Literacy Programs in Texas, 2002

	Stressors	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Sometimes (3) *	Often (4) *	Missing
1.	Data Collection/Analysis	2.4	9.5	47.6	40.5	0.0
2.	Statewide Accountability System	11.9	11.9	28.6	45.2	0.0
3.	Development/Maintenance of School Budget	9.5	19.0	33.3	38.1	0.0
4.	Funding-Related Issues	21.4	9.5	19.0	50.0	0.0
5.	Student Achievement	7.1	26.2	40.5	26.2	0.0
6.	Selection of Staff and Faculty	14.3	26.2	38.1	21.4	0.0
7.	Administration of Programs for Special Needs Students	9.5	33.3	35.7	21.4	0.0
8.	Data Collection/Analysis	4.8	40.5	26.2	28.6	0.0
9.	Dealing With Unsatisfactory Performance by Professional Staff	11.9	33.3	33.3	21.4	0.0
10.	Dismissal of Staff or Teacher	16.7	31.0	35.7	16.7	0.0
11.	Start/End of School	23.8	26.2	26.2	23.8	0.0
12.	Facilities-Related Issues	11.9	40.5	28.6	19.0	0.0
13.	Teacher/Staff Performance Evaluations	14.3	38.1	28.6	19.0	0.0
14.	Dealing With Auxiliary Staff	16.7	33.3	31.0	16.7	1.0
15.	Student Transportation Issues	33.3	23.8	31.0	11.9	0.0
16.	Relationships With Administrators	35.7	28.6	21.4	14.3	0.0
17.	Refusal of Teacher/Staff to Follow Approved Policies	33.3	31.0	23.8	11.9	0.0
18.	Conflict Among Administrative Staff Members	35.7	33.3	21.4	9.5	0.0
19.	Personal Mistakes	19.0	50.0	19.0	4.8	0.0
20.	Forced Staff Reduction	38.1	38.1	9.5	11.9	0.0
21.	Over Crowded Schools	50.0	28.6	11.9	9.5	0.0
22.	Student Drug/Alcohol Use abuse	33.3	47.6	11.9	7.1	0.0
23.	Verbal Abuse From Students And/or Parents	33.3	47.6	16.7	2.4	0.0
24.	Ethical Transgressions by staff	40.5	42.9	9.5	7.1	0.0

Table 13 **Continued**

	Stressors	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Sometimes (3) *	Often (4) *	Missing
25.	Legal Action/Lawsuits	66.7	16.7	11.9	4.8	0.0
26.	School Governance Issues	52.4	33.3	4.8	9.5	0.0
27.	Implementation of Board of Trustees Policies	59.5	26.2	7.1	7.1	0.0
28.	Student Discipline Hearings	59.5	26.2	7.1	7.1	0.0
29.	Parental Complaints	38.1	45.2	9.5	4.8	0.0
30.	Board of Trustees Pressures	52.4	33.3	9.5	4.8	0.0
31.	Construction Related Issues	66.7	19.0	4.8	7.1	1.0
32.	School Violence	52.4	35.7	4.8	4.8	0.0
33.	Assault on a Staff Member	71.4	21.4	7.1	0.0	0.0
34.	Racial/Ethnic Issues	42.9	50.0	2.4	4.8	0.0
35.	Student Extra-Curricular Activities	78.6	16.7	4.8	0.0	0.0
36.	Criticism in the Press	81.0	16.7	0.0	2.4	0.0
37.	Vandalism	47.6	42.9	7.1	2.4	0.0
38.	Teacher Union Relations	85.7	11.9	0.0	2.4	0.0
39.	Food Services Related Issues	88.1	9.5	2.4	0.0	0.0
40.	Faculty/Staff Drug Testing	88.1	9.5	2.4	0.0	0.0

** Note: * Note: Ranked in Descending Order Based on Sum of "Sometimes (3)" and "Often (4)" Responses*

Table 14

Summary of Responses of Means and Standard Deviations of Selected Occupational Stressors as Identified and Ranked on a Four-Point Likert Scale According to the Perceptions of Frequency of Effect by Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

	Stressors	Means	Standard Deviation
1.	Data Collection/Analysis	3.26	0.89
2.	Statewide Accountability System	3.10	1.04
3.	Development/Maintenance of School Budget	3.00	0.99
4.	Funding Related Issues	2.98	1.22
5.	Student Achievement	2.86	0.90
6.	Technology Related Issues	2.79	0.92
7.	Administration of Programs for Special Needs Students	2.69	0.92
8.	Selection of Faculty and Staff	2.67	0.98
9.	Dealing With Unsatisfactory Performance by Professional Staff	2.64	0.96
10.	Facilities Related Issues	2.55	0.94
11.	Dismissal of a Teacher/Staff Member	2.52	0.97
12.	Teacher/Staff Performance Evaluations	2.82	0.97
13.	Start/End of School	2.50	1.11
14.	Dealing With Auxiliary Staff	2.49	0.98
15.	Parental Complaints	2.26	3.07
16.	Student Transportation Issues	2.21	1.05
17.	Refusal of Teacher/Staff to Follow Approved Policies	2.14	1.03
18.	Relationships With Administrators From Other School Districts	2.14	1.07
19.	Racial/Ethnic Issues	2.10	0.79
20.	Conflict Among Administrative Staff Members	2.05	0.99
21.	Forced Staff Reduction	1.95	1.00
22.	Student Drug/Alcohol Use and or Abuse	1.93	0.87
23.	Verbal Abuse From Students and or Parents	1.89	0.77
24.	Ethical Transgressions by Staff Members	1.83	0.88
25.	School Violence	1.83	1.65
26.	Over Crowded Schools	1.81	0.99
27.	School Governance Issues	1.71	0.94
28.	Racial/Ethnic Issues	1.69	0.75

Table 14 **Continued**

	Stressors	Means	S D
29.	Board of Trustee Pressures	1.67	0.85
30.	Vandalism	1.64	0.73
31.	Implementation of Board of Trustees Policies	1.62	0.91
32.	Student Discipline Hearings	1.62	0.91
33.	Legal Action/Lawsuits	1.55	0.89
34.	Construction Related Issues	1.51	0.55
35.	Assault on a Staff Member	1.36	0.62
36.	Student Extra-Curricular Activities	1.26	0.54
37.	Criticism in the Press	1.24	0.58
38.	Teacher Union Relations	1.19	0.55
39.	Faculty/Staff Drug Testing	1.14	0.42
40.	Food Services-Related Issues	1.14	0.42

** Note: Ranked in Descending Order Greatest to Least*

One other question asked about whether the 2002-2003 budget allocation had been received by the program administrator. A majority (75.6%) had received the budget allocation, 24.4 percent had not. This is relevant because funding and budget issues are rated as high stressors in this study.

Research Question Three

Research question three addressed the occupational stress-coping mechanisms related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas. Table 15 contains the percentages for stress-coping mechanisms as identified and rated according to the respondents. The stress-coping mechanisms were ranked according to the total number of "3" responses, which represented stress-coping mechanisms that were experienced sometimes, plus the "4" responses, which represented stress-coping mechanisms that were experienced often (Table 15). In Table 16, the 19 occupational stress-coping mechanisms are ranked in descending order according to means.

The top stress-coping mechanisms were *Planning Ahead for Stressful Events, Talking to Spouse or Significant Other About Events, Talking to Peer(s) About Events, Reading* and *Engaging in Religious/Spiritual Pursuits*. The least indicated stress-coping mechanisms were *Playing on an Organized Athletic Team, Taking Part in Individual Sports/Recreation,* and *Cooking*.

Table 15

Summary of Percentages of Selected Stress-Coping Mechanisms as Ranked on a Four-Point Likert Scale According to the Perceptions of Frequency of Use by Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

	Stress-Coping Mechanisms	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	On A Regular Basis (3)	Most Often (4)
1.	Planning Ahead for Stressful Events	10.0	12.5	52.5	25.0
2.	Talking to Peers About Events	9.8	17.1	58.5	14.6
3.	Delegating Work to Others	2.4	29.3	58.5	9.8
4.	Engaging in Religious/Spiritual Pursuits	17.1	17.1	36.6	29.3
5.	Talking to Spouse or Significant Other About Event	14.6	19.5	34.1	31.7
6.	Delegating Responsibility to Others	7.3	29.3	53.7	9.8
7.	Taking a Short Period of Time to Relax	2.4	36.6	48.8	12.2
8.	Reading	4.9	39.0	29.3	26.8
9.	Computer Activities	24.4	29.3	41.4	4.9
10.	Getting Away From Work Environment	7.3	46.3	34.1	12.2
11.	Watching Television	17.1	36.6	39.0	7.3
12.	Working on Hobbies	19.5	34.1	39.0	7.3
13.	Exercising and or Health Clubs	17.1	39.0	26.8	17.1
14.	Using Meditation or Reflection Time	15.4	41.0	28.2	15.4
15.	Eating	17.1	43.9	24.4	14.6
16.	Engaging in Activities Relating to Fine Arts	22.0	41.5	26.8	9.8
17.	Cooking	40.0	30.0	25.0	5.0
18.	Taking Part in Individual Sports/Recreation	68.3	17.1	9.8	4.9
19.	Playing on an Organized Athletic Team	92.7	2.4	4.9	0.0

** Note: Ranked in Descending Order Based on Sum of "On a Regular Basis (3)" and "Most Often (4)" Responses*

Table 16

Summary of Responses of the Means and Standard Deviations of Selected Stress-Coping Mechanisms as Identified and Ranked on a Four-Point Likert Scale According to the Perceptions of Frequency of Use by Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Stress-Coping Mechanisms	Means	Standard Deviation
1. Planning Ahead for Stressful Events	2.93	0.89
2. Talking to Spouse or Significant Other	2.83	1.05
3. Talking to Peer(s) About Events	2.78	0.82
4. Reading	2.78	0.91
5. Engaging in Religious/Spiritual Pursuits	2.78	1.06
6. Delegating Work to Others	2.76	0.66
7. Taking a Short Period of Time to Relax	2.71	0.72
8. Delegating Responsibility to Others	2.66	0.76
9. Using Meditation or Reflection Time	2.66	0.94
10. Getting Away From Work Environment	2.51	0.81
11. Exercising or Health Clubs	2.44	0.98
12. Watching Television	2.37	0.86
13. Eating	2.36	0.94
14. Working on Hobbies	2.34	0.88
15. Computer Activities	2.26	0.90
16. Engaging in Activities Relating to Fine Arts	2.24	0.92
17. Cooking	1.95	0.93
18. Taking Part in Individual Sports/Recreation	1.51	0.87
19. Playing on an Organized Athletic Team	1.12	0.46

** Note: Ranked in Descending Order Greatest to Least*

At the end of the section on coping mechanisms there was an open ended question about whether the program directors had other coping mechanisms they used in addition to the ones ranked on the questionnaire. About one-third (29.3%) of the participants responded with short answers about other coping strategies. The themes of

the comments included: recreation, talking, venting frustrations, planning ahead, and relaxation through breathing techniques. Recreation was discussed as a coping mechanism in active ways such as gardening, yard work, playing with children. Leisure activities such as watching movies and writing were also mentioned. Talking was another theme, either talking with other directors, with family, or attending professional counseling. Using methods to vent frustrations was mentioned in the form of ‘silent scream’ and ‘run outside and scream.’ One respondent noted their impending retirement as a good coping mechanism.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question considered whether or not selected demographic variables impacted the perceived occupational stressors and the coping mechanisms identified by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each occupational stressor and each stress-coping mechanism relative to each demographic variable. A Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to determine the magnitude of the relationship for occupational stressors and stress-coping mechanisms relative to the selected demographic variables. The coefficient of determination was also calculated to determine the proportion of variance that the correlated variables have in common. Table 17 displays the occupational stressors that were determined to have a significant computed probability value less than or equal to .05 for the selected and reported demographic variables. Table 18 includes the stress-coping mechanisms which were

determined to have a significant computed probability value less than or equal to .05 for the selected and reported demographic variables. The results were as follows:

1. *Age*
    - Stressor: Data Collection
    - Stress-Coping: Eating
2. *Gender*
    - Stressor: Dealing with Auxiliary Staff
    - Stress-Coping: Delegating Work to Others
    - Stress-Coping: Getting Away From the Work Environment
3. *Total Years Employed in Education*
    - Stressor: Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by professional staff
    - Stressor: Dismissal of staff/teacher
    - Stressor: Refusal of teacher/staff to follow approved policies
    - Stress-Coping: Planning ahead for stressful events
4. *Employed in Current Position*
    - Stressor: Selection of staff/faculty
5. *Years in Current Adult Education Program*
    - Stressor: Conflict among administrative staff members
    - Stressor: Dealing with auxiliary staff
    - Stressor: Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by professional staff
6. *Total Years in Adult Education*
    - Stressor: Conflict among staff members

- Stressor: Data Collection/analysis
- Stressor: Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by staff
- Stressor: Teacher union relations
- Stressor: Family related stress

7. *Total Years in Supervision*

- Stressor: Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by staff

8. *Average Hours Worked Per Week*

- Stressor: Development and maintenance of school budget
- Stress-Coping: Exercising

9. *Overall Stress*

- Student Achievement
- Personal Stress

Table 17

Summary of Results of the Degree of Relationship Between Selected Demographic Variables Based on the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and the Coefficient of Determination for Occupational Stressors with a Significant Probability Value ($p \leq .05$) According to the Perceptions of Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Occupational Stressor	r	r^2	P
Age (n=41)			
Data Collection	-0.34	-0.12	0.04
Gender (n=39)			
Dealing with auxiliary staff	-0.37	-0.14	0.02
Funding	0.35	0.12	0.03
Years Employed in Education (n=40)			
Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by professional staff	-0.36	-0.01	0.02
Dismissal of staff/teacher	-0.37	-0.01	0.18
Refusal of teacher/staff to follow approved policies	-0.31	-0.10	0.05
Years Employed in Current Position (n=30)			
Selection of staff/faculty	-0.46	-0.02	0.01
Years in Current Adult Education Program (n=39)			
Conflict among administrative staff members	-0.37	-0.14	0.04
Dealing with auxiliary staff	-0.44	-0.19	0.01
Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by professional staff	-0.41	-0.17	0.02
Total Years in Adult Education (n=38)			
Conflict among staff members	-0.41	-0.17	0.03
Data Collection/analysis	-0.37	-0.14	0.02
Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by staff	-0.32	-0.10	0.05
Teacher union relations	-0.34	-0.12	0.03
Family related stress	-0.32	-0.10	0.05

Table 17 **Continued**

Occupational Stressor	r	r^2	P
Total Years in Supervision (n=38)			
Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by staff	-0.36	-0.13	0.03
Average Number of Hours Worked Per Week (n=40)			
Development and maintenance of school budget	-0.36	-0.13	0.02
Overall Stress (n=42)			
Student Achievement	0.34	0.16	0.03
Personal Stress	0.35	0.12	0.03

Table 18

Summary of Results of the Degree of Relationship Between Selected Demographic Variables Based on the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and the Coefficient of Determination for Stress-Coping Mechanisms with a Significant Probability Value ($p \leq .05$) According to the Perceptions of Directors of Adult Literacy Education Programs in Texas, 2002

Stress -Mechanism	r	r^2	P
Age (n=41)			
Eating	0.41	0.17	0.01
Gender (n=39)			
Delegating Work to Others	-0.33	-0.11	0.04
Getting Away From Work	-0.38	-0.14	0.02
Years Employed in Education (n=40)			
Planning Ahead for Stressful Events	-0.33	-0.11	0.04
Average Number of Hours Worked Per Week (n=40)			
Exercising	-0.32	-0.10	0.05

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section summarizes the literature review, the purpose of the study, and the procedures of the study. The second section presents the conclusions that were determined from the research as well as the literature review. The third section presents the recommendations regarding how to apply the findings of this study to adult literacy education.

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of adult literacy education program directors in Texas concerning the general level of occupational stress, and to identify and assess stressors and coping mechanisms for this population. In addition, whether a relationship existed between selected demographic variables and occupational stressors and coping mechanisms related to job performance for directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas were examined.

A survey instrument was sent to all adult literacy education program directors in Texas. Demographic information was acquired as well as information regarding types of stressors and coping strategies used by those adult literacy education program directors. The results of the study are discussed in greater detail and conclusions drawn which suggest how the results contribute to the current body of knowledge about stressors and coping strategies.

This study reviewed the literature regarding the development of adult literacy education in the United States since the eighteenth century. The growth and changes in

the education of adults in America were presented. Literature related to the participants and programs of adult literacy in Texas discussed the demographics and mission of these programs. Literature about the administration of adult literacy education was reviewed to determine the functions and job skills required of a program director. Finally, literature regarding stress, coping in general, and in the occupation of educational administrator was reviewed. However little information was found regarding specific stressors and the coping mechanisms used by adult literacy education program directors.

Summary

A review of the literature indicated the vital nature of adult literacy education in the nation and Texas today. The pivotal importance of the program director to a literacy program's success was also established. Adult literacy education in the United States has developed over the past three centuries into a mosaic of diverse programs that strive to meet the many challenges that face government, business, communities, families and the individuals who participate. Change and development of the adult literacy education field have been motivated by individual and economic needs, social forces, political changes and world events.

The adult literacy education population in Texas is extremely diverse, including English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), bilingual, learning style differences, and other special needs. Most adult literacy education programs are funded through a patchwork of funding and support from state and local agencies, resulting in frequent fiscal difficulties. Vast changes have taken place in the administration of adult education

programs in the last five years caused by technological changes, welfare reforms, change in the state's management of programs, required evaluations, and record keeping.

The administration of an adult literacy education program is a complex and sometimes stressful job. Administrators face challenges from within and outside of their programs. The adult literacy program director's responsibilities of leadership, community relations, program planning, staff supervision, budget maintenance, evaluations, and compliance with state and federal requirements mirror key elements of the occupation of school superintendent and school principal.

Stress that goes untreated can lead to burnout, depression, stroke, heart attack, and even death. Occupational stress is a concern for managers and for educational administrators. Research regarding the occupational stress perceived by superintendents in Texas (Smith, 2001), female superintendents in Texas (Skrobarcek, 1998), alternative school principals in Texas (McLaughlin, 1998), and middle school administrators (Solis, 1986) all concluded that occupational stress is prevalent in these educational administrative roles. Though occupational stress has been researched within many sectors of the education profession, no research was available on the topic of stress and coping mechanism used by administrators in adult literacy programs.

The population for this study was all of the adult literacy education program directors for programs funded by the state of Texas as identified by the Texas Education Agency. These program directors were sent questionnaires regarding stress and strategies for coping. Forty-two of 56 program directors, that is 75%, responded to the questionnaire.

Conclusions

Demographics

Demographic data were established that determined the typical adult literacy education program director to be female, middle-aged, and fairly experienced in the field of education and supervision. Approximately 40% of the participants have between one and five years in their current position or program. There were no demographic data found in the literature review for this occupation with which to compare these findings. The demographic data are similar to the data for school superintendents (Smith, 2001) in the characteristics of age, experience in education, experience in supervision, and the length of time in the current position. The main demographic difference between the directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas and school superintendents in Texas is that the adult literacy directors are much more likely to be female (76.9%).

Research Question One

What is the perceived general stress level of adult literacy education program directors in Texas?

Question #1 analyzed the perceived general stress level of adult literacy education program directors in Texas by evaluating the perceived overall stress level with a 10-point Likert scale and also by assessing three components of stress. Based on the ten-point Likert scale; the mean perceived level of overall stress (Table 9, p.64) for all respondents was 6.21 on a scale of 0 to 10. Zero represented no stress, “5” represented moderate stress, and “10” represented severe stress. The most frequently indicated level of stress was “7.” Three respondents indicated “10” the highest level of

stress, which represented severe stress. Over four-fifths (83.3%) indicated a stress level of moderate or higher (Table 8, p.63).

Also, the perceived general stress level of adult literacy education program directors in Texas was evaluated by collecting data about three stress components, namely, professional stress, family stress, and personal stress as shown in Table 10 (p.64). Professional stress ranked highest of the three components. Professional stress has a mean score of 3.11, which indicates that professional stress is perceived to be experienced sometimes or often by the respondents (Table 11, p.65). Professional stress was indicated as 'often' 42.9%, and 'sometimes' 31.0%. Family and personal stress were indicated less than that of professional stress. Personal stress was indicated as 'often' by 9.5% of the respondents. Family stress was indicated as 'often' by 7.1% of the respondents.

A product-moment correlation performed between selected stress components and the overall general level of stress determined that personal stress had a significant probability value at ($p \leq .05$) level. This indicates that it can be concluded that a high general level of stress correlates with a high personal level of stress.

The researcher concluded that similar to other educational administrators in the United States, a majority of adult literacy education program directors in Texas experienced a significant level of occupational stress, in addition; the overall general level of stress is high. Promoting an understanding that this occupation is stressful is a good first step in helping program directors to cope with the professional stress. Awareness of occupational stress and educating those that it affects can be addressed

through in-service training, informational newsletters, and as a topic for discussion groups of adult literacy education directors on line or at meetings of professional organizations.

Research Question Two

What are the occupational stressors related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

Question #2 analyzed 40 stressors. Based on the data in Tables 13 (p.68) and Table14 (p.70). The top stressors identified by adult literacy education program directors were:

- *Data Collection/Analysis,*
- *Statewide Accountability System*
- *Development/ Maintenance of School Budget.*
- *Funding Related Issues*
- *Student Achievement*
- *Technology-related Issues*
- *Administration of Programs for Special Students*
- *Selection of Faculty and Staff*
- *Dealing with Unsatisfactory Performance by Professional Staff*
- *Dismissal of a Teacher or Staff Member*

The top three stressors were identified by over 40% of the program directors as being experienced ‘most often’. Those three stressors are related to duties mandated by the

state and are the key components in the management of adult literacy education programs in Texas.

The stressors that were indicated the least by program directors were:

- *Teacher Union Relations*
- *Food Services Related Issues*
- *Faculty Drug Testing*
- *Criticism in the Press*

Those four stressors were selected by over 80% of the respondents as 'never' being experienced. Therefore, those are issues that adult literacy education program administrators in Texas did not encounter, and are not usually applicable to this population.

Implications. Recent research about the occupational stress of educational administrators agrees with the above findings. Many authors have written about the intense job demands of educational administrators ((Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Brock & Grady, 2002; Glass, et al., 2000; Gmelch, 1996). Glass, et al. (2000) found the same trends in the types of stressors for superintendents as the researcher found in the current study. Glass et al. (2000) reported that particularly acute occupational stress existed for superintendents due to the pressures caused by the lack of adequate funding, personnel issues, and state mandates.

The first theme that emerges is that the top three stressors are related to duties mandated by the state and are the key components in the management of adult literacy education programs in Texas. In recent years, there have been many changes required in

data collection, statewide accountability, and program budgets. Changes in these areas are related to welfare reform, increased evaluations and tightening budgets. Brock & Grady (2002) stated that rapid and frequent changes can produce stress for educational administrators.

A second theme that emerged is related to fiscal issues. Funding and the maintenance of the school budget were the two stressors on the questionnaire related to funding and they are the third and fourth highest stressors for program directors. This finding is supported in research by Cooper & Kelly (1993) regarding occupational stress which found that work overload and handling relationships with staff were the primary sources of stress for educational administrators who have dual responsibilities of managing people and program finances found that

A third stressor theme is related to administration and staff supervision. Four stressors in the top ten highest stressors are related to administration and staff supervision; these stressors are administration of programs for special students, selection of faculty and staff, dealing with unsatisfactory performance by professional staff, and dismissal of a teacher or staff member.

Technology was also indicated as a top stressor. Stress due to technology issues can be related to the problem of rapid change. Technology-related issues can also be associated with the top two stressors; data collection/ analysis, and the statewide accountability system, because technological methods are used for these two tasks. Findings about technology as a stressor agreed with research on the occupational stress of educational administrators in the literature (Brock & Grady, 2002).

To address the sources of stress related to data collection, statewide accountability, and program budgets, training should be made available for administrators to improve their understanding and competencies to handle these demands. A majority of program directors are fairly new in their positions and the requirements of the state accountability and data collection systems change often; therefore, frequent training and sources of immediate assistance should be in place.

Stress related to budget and funding and sources and stress related to administration and staff supervision can be addressed by providing training to help directors improve their skills in these areas. Mini-courses in subjects such as grant writing, basic finance, interviewing skills, or other human resources skills should be offered to program directors. Communication between program directors dealing with all types of stressors would be helpful dealing with all types of stressors. Setting up a system or network in which program directors can share problems, insights, and help others address problems similar to what they may encounter in their job would strengthen the whole adult literacy education system in Texas. These solutions could be executed through planned retreats of program directors, sessions at statewide meetings, e-mail contact, or establishing a system for mentoring less experienced program directors by the more experienced program directors.

Research Question Three

What are the stress-coping mechanisms related to job performance as perceived by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

Question #3 analyzed the19 stress-coping mechanisms from the research instrument. Based on the data in Table 15, (p.73) the major stress-coping mechanisms employed by directors of adult literacy education programs in Texas were:

- *Planning ahead for stressful events*
- *Talking to spouse or significant other about events*
- *Talking to peer(s) about events*
- *Reading*
- *Engaging in religious/spiritual pursuits*

Table16 (p.74) lists the means and standard deviations in decreasing order of the nineteen stress-coping mechanisms on the questionnaire. The three least indicated stress-coping mechanisms all require a commitment of time and the desire for physical activity, they were:

- *Playing on an organized athletic team*
- *Taking part in individual sports/recreation*
- *Cooking*

Implications. McLaughlin (1998) reported that numerous authors advocated religious and spiritual pursuits, planning for stress, and refining communication skills as effective stress-coping mechanisms. Brock & Grady's (2002) recommendations for stress-coping include socializing and talking with family, prayer, resting, and managing time effectively.

Planning ahead for stressful events (the top stress-coping mechanism) can be advocated and modeled by the state adult education leaders through long range planning and good communication with program directors.

Training in communication skills and time management would help the program directors practice the stress-coping mechanisms recommended here. Time management is necessary in order to function well in the demanding occupation of adult literacy education director and to make time to cope with stress with activities such as reading, exercising, engaging in spiritual pursuits, and communicating with peers and family.

The least indicated stress-coping mechanisms were *playing on an organized athletic team,* and *taking part in individual sports/recreation.* The other choice of a physical activity represented in the stress-coping questionnaire was *exercise or health clubs,* which was also rated low. These stress-coping mechanisms may be neglected because they require time, or because the program directors do not choose physical activity as a way to deal with occupational stress. Physical exercise, yoga, and participation in sports are often recommended as ways to reduce the effects of stress (Zwickle, 1994). Like most Americans, this research population probably needs to be more active. There are many opportunities in every community to participate in an active lifestyle.

Research Question Four

To what degree do demographic variables impact the perceived occupational stressors and the coping mechanisms identified by adult literacy education program administrators in Texas?

The purpose of question #4 is to examine the stressors and coping mechanisms based on demographics. The eight demographic variables were:

- age
- gender
- years employed in education
- years employed in current position
- years in current adult education
- total years in adult education
- total years in supervision
- average number of hours worked per week

When the eight demographic variables and 40 stressors were analyzed, 18 significant relationships were found. When the nine demographic variables and 19 stress-coping mechanisms were analyzed five significant relationships were found (see Table 17, p.78, and Table 18, p.80).

1. *Age*
    - Stressor: Data Collection
    - Stress-Coping: Eating

The occupational stressor *data collection* was rated lower in regard to its significance as a source of occupational stress by older adult literacy education program directors. This may indicate that they are very experienced and competent in their jobs. Therefore data collection is not as stressful to them as it is to the rest of the population of program directors who rated it as the number one source of occupational stress. The stress-coping

mechanism that had a significant probability with *age* is *eating.* The older respondents indicated that they use eating as a stress-coping technique more often than younger respondents. Using eating as a stress-coping technique often is indicative of an unhealthy weight and lifestyle, which could be particularly detrimental to older people.

2. *Gender*

- Stressor: Dealing with Auxiliary Staff
- Stress-Coping: Delegating Work to Others
- Stress-Coping: Getting Away From the Work Environment

Female adult literacy education program directors in Texas rated the stressor, *dealing with auxiliary staff* higher than males did in this study. This may indicate that some female program directors would benefit from training in personnel issues. Males in this study rated *funding* as a higher stressor than females did. This may indicated that some males would benefit from training related to budgeting and grant writing. Regarding stress-coping mechanisms related to gender, females rated *delegating work to others* and *getting away from the work environment* higher than males did in this study. These are two effective stress-coping mechanisms, male program directors should also employ these techniques.

3. *Total Years Employed in Education*

- Stressor: Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by professional staff
- Stressor: Dismissal of staff/teacher
- Stressor: Refusal of teacher/staff to follow approved policies
- Stress-Coping: Planning ahead for stressful events

Experienced educators, those with most total years in education rated these occupational stressors lower in regard to the significance as a source of occupational stress. The one stress-coping mechanism that was found to be significantly related to *total years employed in education* is *planning ahead for stressful events.* These outcomes show that a more experienced educator has developed better administrative skills to handle personnel issues. Also, the significant stress-coping mechanism, *planning ahead for stressful events*, reflects that the experienced program director has developed strong administrative abilities and does not need to plan ahead for stressful events.

4. Employed in Current Position

- Stressor: Selection of staff/faculty

Selection of staff/faculty was rated lower in regard to significance as a source of stress if the program director had been employed in the current position for a longer time. This outcome reflects the abilities and experience of the program director, and perhaps the status quo nature of the program.

5. *Years in Current Adult Education Program*

- Stressor: Conflict among administrative staff members
- Stressor: Dealing with auxiliary staff
- Stressor: Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by professional staff

Results show that the longer a program director has been employed in the current adult education program these three stressors related to personnel conflicts are indicated less.

6. *Total Years in Adult Education*

- Stressor: Conflict among staff members

- Stressor: Data Collection/analysis
- Stressor: Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by staff
- Stressor: Teacher union relations
- Stressor: Family related stress

Similar to the three previous demographic characteristics, more years of experience is related to a lack of stress in the most stressful areas. The adult education program directors with more years of experience in adult education rated these occupational stressors lower in regard to the significance as a source of stress.

7. *Total Years in Supervision*

- Stressor: Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by staff

As in the other relationships between stressors and years of experience, the demographic characteristic of total years in supervision indicated that the stressor, dealing with unsatisfactory performance by staff, was considered to be lower by program directors with more experience in supervision.

8. *Average Hours Worked Per Week*

- Stressor: Development and maintenance of school budget
- Stress-Coping: Exercising

Program directors who reported working more hours per week rated the stressor; development and maintenance of school budget to be a lower source of stress that directors who worked less hours per week. It can be concluded that more time spent at work resulted in the directors being less stressed by the development and maintenance of the program's budget. Program directors who reported working more hours per week

rated the stress-coping mechanism of exercising lower than directors who worked less hours per week. Working more than a 40 hour week as the majority (82%) of program directors did, may result in not having available time to exercise.

One overall trend regarding the relationship between demographic variables and occupational stressors is that experienced program directors indicate lower stress in some areas related to administrative and managerial competencies than less experienced program directors. It can be concluded that the more experienced an adult literacy education program director is in adult education, a lower level of occupational stress is experienced compared to less experienced adult literacy education program directors. This is logical as the experienced directors have been effective in their occupations and have stayed in the position of adult literacy education program director. More years on the job honing their administrative and managerial skills have made them less affected by stressors that rank higher for less experienced directors. Similarly, one stress-coping mechanism showed a relationship between years of experience employed in education and the lack of stress in an area that others rated as very stressful. Planning ahead for stressful events was rated as the top stressor by the total population of the study. Experienced directors rated planning ahead for stressful events lower than directors with fewer years of experience. This may also be because of their wealth of experience and mastery of the job competencies.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations are proposed as a result of this study for dealing with occupational stress for adult literacy education directors. There are both recommendations based on the study and recommendations for further research.

Recommendations based on this study

1. Based on the findings of a moderate to high overall stress level for adult literacy education program directors, there is a need for awareness about the presence of occupational stress and there is a need to address it is for this population. Profession development programs are needed to help program directors identify their particular stressors and the best ways for them to cope with occupational stress.
2. Professional development is needed to develop a long range plan of in-service training that helps program directors develop competencies to meet their own particular needs. Competencies related to administrative and personnel issues and budgets and fiscal issues are particular areas that were indicated as important target areas that need development of the skills of adult literacy education program directors.
3. There is a need to develop systems to allow for mentoring of newer program directors, and peer communication for program directors. This may be done through a listserv or other means.
4. Leadership from the state office to assist program directors in planning ahead for stressful events. This may be accomplished through long range planning

including all program directors, and frequent communications from the state office.

Recommendations for further research

1. Further study with more demographic data regarding the programs would be helpful to determine if the characteristics of program affects the occupational stressors or coping mechanisms of the program director. Student enrollment, contact hours, type of host organization, and the demographics of the students would be interesting factors to explore. Also, what the specific duties of the program director are, including the number of teachers and staff that are supervised, the number of special needs student, including ESL, and learning disabled students could be explored.
2. Further information about the program directors including educational background, and whether they have had specific training for their positions would provide more important information about indicators of occupational stress and ways to cope with stress.
3. This study focused on the frequency of particular stressors and stress-coping mechanisms. An analysis of stress intensity would also be helpful in understanding the stressors and stress-coping mechanisms and what can be done to reduce stress for this population.
4. Replication of this study with program administrators in other states would provide a greater depth of data regarding this subject and could identify

characteristics that may be the same or different for Texas adult literacy education program directors and program directors of other states.

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APPENDIX A

The Stress and Coping Questionnaire

ID#_____ page 1 of 3

Stressor Inventory

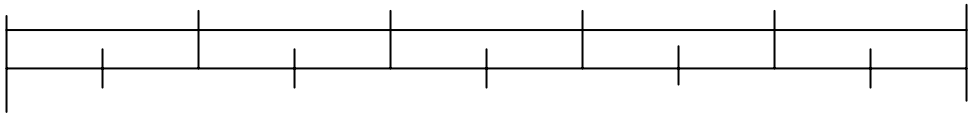
Please rate each stressor on a scale of “1” to “4” with a “1” given to those stressors that you never experience, and a “4” to those stressors you experience most often. Consider the stressors you encounter for this year only.

1=NEVER, 2=SELDOM, 3=SOMETIMES, 4=OFTEN

1	Administration of programs for special needs students.	1	2	3	4
2	Student drug/alcohol use and or abuse.	1	2	3	4
3	Assault on a staff member.	1	2	3	4
4	Board of trustee pressures.	1	2	3	4
5	Conflict among administrative staff members.	1	2	3	4
6	Criticism in the press.	1	2	3	4
7	Data collection/ analysis.	1	2	3	4
8	Dealing with auxiliary staff.	1	2	3	4
9	Legal action/lawsuits.	1	2	3	4
10	Dealing with unsatisfactory performance by professional staff.	1	2	3	4
11	Development/maintenance of school budget.	1	2	3	4
12	Dismissal of a teacher/staff member.	1	2	3	4
13	Facilities related issues.	1	2	3	4
14	Food Services related issues.	1	2	3	4
15	Forced staff reduction.	1	2	3	4
16	Implementation of board of trustee policies.	1	2	3	4
17	Overcrowded schools.	1	2	3	4
18	Racial/ethnic issues.	1	2	3	4
19	School governance issues.	1	2	3	4
20	School violence.	1	2	3	4
21	Selection of faculty and staff.	1	2	3	4
22	Start/end of school.	1	2	3	4
23	Student achievement.	1	2	3	4
24	Student discipline hearings.	1	2	3	4
25	Student transportation issues.	1	2	3	4
26	Teacher/staff performance evaluations.	1	2	3	4
27	Vandalism.	1	2	3	4
28	Verbal abuse from students and or parents.	1	2	3	4
29	Technology related issues.	1	2	3	4
30	Funding related issues.	1	2	3	4
31	Faculty/staff drug testing.	1	2	3	4
32	Teacher union relations	1	2	3	4
33	Construction related issues.	1	2	3	4
34	Statewide accountability system.	1	2	3	4
35	Relationships with administrators from other school districts.	1	2	3	4
36	Parental complaints.	1	2	3	4
37	Refusal of teacher/staff to follow approved polices.	1	2	3	4
38	Student extra-curricular activities.	1	2	3	4
39	Ethical transgressions by staff members.	1	2	3	4

40	Personal mistakes.	1	2	3	4
41	Rate the following sources of stress:				
	Professional	1	2	3	4
	Family related	1	2	3	4
	Personal	1	2	3	4

42 On a scale of 1-10, estimate your perceived general stress level. Mark an "X" at the appropriate location on the scale.



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No Stress Moderate Stress Severe Stress

43 Are there other stressors that you encounter in your job? If so what are they?

_____

_____

COPING MECHANISMS

Please identify the following stress-coping mechanisms by circling your best answer for each item**. 1=NEVER, 2=SELDOM, 3=ON A REGULAR BASIS, 4=MOST OFTEN**

"I choose to cope with stress by:"

44	Using meditation or reflection time.	1	2	3	4
45	Delegating responsibility to other(s).	1	2	3	4
46	Delegating work to other(s).	1	2	3	4
47	Exercising and or health clubs.	1	2	3	4
48	Getting away from the work environment.	1	2	3	4
49	Working on Hobbies:	1	2	3	4
50	Planning ahead for stressful events.	1	2	3	4
51	Playing on an organized athletic team:	1	2	3	4
52	Taking part in individual sports/recreation:	1	2	3	4
53	Engaging in religious/spiritual pursuits.	1	2	3	4
54	Taking a short period of time to relax.	1	2	3	4
55	Talking to peer(s) about events.	1	2	3	4
56	Talking to spouse or significant other about events.	1	2	3	4
57	Engaging in activities relating to fine arts:	1	2	3	4
58	Cooking	1	2	3	4
59	Eating	1	2	3	4
60	Reading	1	2	3	4
61	Watching television	1	2	3	4
62	Computer activities	1	2	3	4

63 Are there other coping strategies you use?

_____

_____

64 Had you received your FY2002-2003 budget allocation at the time you completed this survey?
Circle: Yes / No

Personal Data

65 Age _____
66 Gender_____

Career Data

Years Employed In:
66 Education Profession (Total)_____
67 Current Position _____
68 Current Adult Education Program_____
69 Adult Education (Total)_____
70 Supervision_____
71 Average number of hours worked per week_____

How were you selected for your current position?

72 Recruited from another Adult Education program? Yes/ No
73 Promoted from within present program? Yes/ No
74 Other_____

_____

If you would like a copy of the results of this research please provide mailing information here, thanks:

Name:
Address:

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter for Questionnaire

Texas Center for Adult Literacy & Learning
College of Education -- Department of EAHRD
Texas A&M University
4226 TAMU
College Station, Texas 77843-4226

979 845-6615
Fax 979 845-0952

June 3, 2002

Dear Adult Education Director,

We are asking you, together with all of the other directors of adult education programs in Texas, to complete the attached questionnaire and return it in the enclosed envelope. Responding to the questionnaire will take about twenty minutes. Your completion of this includes you as a participant in a research study entitled **"Occupational stress and coping mechanisms as perceived by the Directors of Adult Education programs in Texas."**

All information collected will be confidential. Results of this study will be reported in aggregate form. No individual data will be released. Please indicate on the page of the survey if you would like to receive a copy of this completed report. Results of this study will provide information that could be used as a resource in the training of adult education administrators and may provide implications for in-service training programs in the future.

This is the required consent information: "I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Support Services, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4607. I have read and understand the explanation provided me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of the consent form."

Thank you for your participation. Please contact me if you have any questions.

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1979	Bachelor of Science in Education Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas

EXPERIENCE

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1994-1996	Tutor TAAS Remediation A&M Consolidated High School, College Station, Texas
1993-1994	Teacher A&M Consolidated High School, College Station, Texas
1992-1993	Teacher New Visions, Wackenhut Correctional Incorporated, Kyle, Texas
1991-1992	Instructor Southwest Texas State University, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, San Marcos, Texas
1989-1991	Substitute Teacher San Marcos Independent School District, San Marcos, Texas